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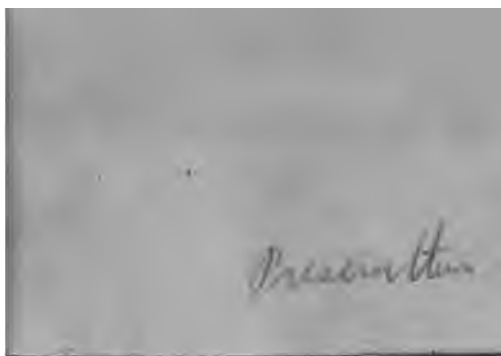












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DISCOURSES

ON THE

CHRISTIAN BODY AND FORM.

Wm. L. G. Bartol
BY C. A. BARTOL,

JUNIOR MINISTER OF THE WEST CHURCH IN BOSTON.

(Unitarian)

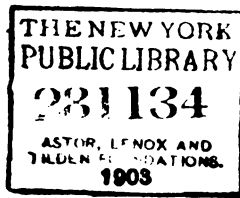
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GEORGE C. SHATTUCK,
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT IN WORDS
OF
GOOD AND TIMELY DEEDS.

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DISCOURSES.

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DISCOURSES.

INTRODUCTION.

AN intention to explain what may appear singular in my title, to show the sources of my preparation, and, upon a hearing already beyond expectation or claim, to justify this request of the public ear, may authorize some preliminary remarks. Some time ago, I put forth a volume on the Christian Spirit and Life. Ever since, one haunting thought, more close than any other, has continually returned to me,—asked for expression, and called itself by this name of the Christian Body and Form. It has offered itself as a subject necessary to balance and complete the former theme; and, moreover, as by many persons among us, in their tendency to view things under the light of abstractions, now much neglected: for the running after ghosts, that so marks the present period, would seem a fit caricature of the disposition to hunt for truth, less among the substantial facts of providence and experience, than in the thin air of metaphysical

reasoning. Not a few have come to despise, or see no utility in, and thus been inclined to shake off, or let go by default, to flout with forgetful irregularity, or slight with long postponement, the most venerable customs and traditions of our religion; and some would even melt all its old peculiarities of form and doctrine, as but rusty cast-off fragments, in the foundry of their own minds, for restatement after the pattern of some prevailing philosophy. From the hardness and dryness of a literal theology, or from the chafing of ecclesiastical oppression, a part of the community has been thrown off into the other extreme of free-thinking, endless speculation, and well-nigh savage independence and solitary vagrancy of religious manners.

Under such circumstances, one may be excused for thinking it time to come back to a sober consideration of those actual and permanent traits of Christianity which make it something outside of our conceit, unalterable by our will as it is unimprovable by our wisdom, and with which we have grave practical dealing, either to proceed according to its landmarks by the hand of God planted, or to fall against this stone and be broken. Believing not only that Christianity is a religion for the heart, but that the intellect, which expends itself on ideas purely of its own finding or generation, would be better employed upon the verities of teaching and observance in the gospel, or would obtain a surer guide to all valuable conclusions in the views of

life and duty it opens, I would bring a humble contribution of encouragement to such a course, and some dissuasive from its opposite.

It is obvious at starting, that Christianity may be regarded in a twofold way, as an end and a means. The Christian spirit and life is a certain absolute quality and finished result. But exactly in proportion to its preciousness and importance are we urged by the question, through what instrumentality this quality shall be instilled, this result attained. On the one side is the heavenly truth and immortal excellence; on the other are we, in these earthen vessels, in the midst of the material world. How across the chasm the divine element shall be drawn or poured into us, or how, in our sickly state, the healing power shall be introduced into our frame and blood; what are the channels to be cut, or what the hindrances to be removed; what subtle obstacles may baffle and make vain the whole action of our religion, as an imperceptible wedge keeps the huge ship from launching into the seas;—in short, not so much the object as the method of the gospel, is certainly a serious point of inquiry.

Nor can the importance of this inquiry be brought into doubt, unless by the idea, entertained by some, of the natural and sufficient inspiration of the human mind. This idea would render any special disclosure from Heaven needless; would offer to mankind a vacation from all discipline, and,

indeed, give to exhortations of every sort a superegregatory character. Any preaching of, or connected with, such an idea, may remind one of the familiar nursery-rhyme that commands "perfect men," that they "ever keep the precepts ten;" an injunction which such persons would not seem to require. Even of these childish lines, what is all unqualified magnifying of the soul's native insight and intrinsic purity but a rhetorical swell? If only the moral glories of piety and humanity in common life answered to the amplification, and the deep of a transcendent virtue called back to that of a sublimated philosophy, it would be well. But the theory of an adequate, universal inspiration cannot, for a moment, abide the facts of human history. That light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, like other lights, burns in one or another more or less largely and clearly, with multitudes waxes pale and dim, and in not a few almost wholly goes out. The very question is how to relume, and feed, and spread the celestial lustre. The keeping of the Ten Commandments is no easy thing, and has rarely had a place, correspondent to their old engraving, in any age of the world; to say nothing of those loftier tasks in deportment and spirit which Jesus Christ has assigned. Slowly to raise men up into obedience to law is the aim of every sort of training, civil or theological; and a consummation to which all institutions, directions, prayers, and appliances are pre-requisite. Chris-

tianity is but another mode and new path to its larger and perfect accomplishment.

In an undertaking to determine the particular features of our religion, there is, no doubt, danger of falling into uncharitable restrictions. There is a complexion of liberality, there is a gesture of magnanimity, in wholly waiving such an attempt, and leaving every one unmolested to decide or avoid any point of doctrine or observance at his pleasure. It looks generous to interfere with nobody, and odious to reduce the latitude of any man's freedom. But, after so stout a maintenance as we have had of human liberty, and so successful a protest in these latitudes against all tyranny over the mind, is it not, at last, seasonable to reflect that bigotry, though a great sin, is not the only sin against men, nor dogmatism the solitary injury to the temper of our religion? What is valuable may be lost by evaporation as well as by extinction; and it does not so much matter whether a narrow creed choke the life of Christianity, or a boundless generalization dissipate it. If a hot, sectarian zeal is unjust to the honest dissenter, so is a blank indifference of faith and custom disrespectful to the Word of God and unloving to human souls. It is better to be burnt by the believer's passionate ardor for his own opinions, than chilled by icy disregard of any tenets. It is better to take the kingdom of God by violence, than not even to resolve on peaceful entrance. It is better to lay hold on some part or

corner of the gospel, than to neglect altogether embracing it. That was high praise of a certain class of disciples, that theirs was a religion in earnest; and the bitter complaint of illiberality may indicate a sensitiveness suggestive of suspicion, whether we ourselves stand on a rock. We can bear a little rough search of the contents in the vessel of our belief, if we have a sincere and positive one. The threatening or fearful charge that over this sea of time we sail under wrong colors, or in no heavenly direction, implies a finer tribute of regard than does an utter carelessness about our standard, and whether we sail for the heavenly country at all. It is more promising for the maintenance of Christianity that it should be partially understood and rigidly urged, than that it should be the object of a cool civility, — very large and respectful, bowing to its proofs, but not on fire with its affections, or fulfilling its rules. There may be an excessive denouncing of denominations among Christians. He who is a member of no one of them may yet see all of them as rising from those successive attempts to seize and define the Christian system, whose struggle together widens and deepens the total comprehension of it among men, and without which, though singly failing and imperfect, the religion itself might have been left aside from all concern, and, for the race, long ago in its grave.

Furthermore, the holding of Christianity in some substantial and tangible shape may rightly order

its investigation, and, while allowing to general criticism its fair scope, may yet confine it within just and wholesome limits, and, from for ever repeating the same for ever repelled assaults, put it to some reasonable rest. For a survey of the actual stature and bearing of our religion evinces its truth, as well as does the institution of perpetual inquiry into its historic sources, and following down the whole line of its descent. Some deference is certainly due, not alone to documentary facts, but to vital power. The volcano, no less than an obscure groping among the strata of the earth, or conflict of geologic doctrines, is demonstration of the central fire. What Christianity is and does, furnishes its evidence; not only the circumstances of its origin or conditions of its progress, from the first century to the third, or from the third to the nineteenth. Preposterous is the ground taken by some, — a ground on which all human life would stand still, — that the gospel is to be allowed no acceptance till we can settle every difficulty concerning it, and resolve all doubts. “How,” says our sceptic, “did it get over that early chasm of unrecorded or imperfectly accessible and strangely storied years?” Verily, my friend, it did get over, and is here among us to teach and to bless, however inexplicable or miraculous, as in other cases of preservation, may have been the escape. To deny it recognition till you can fix every point of its genealogy is like refusing to listen to a man’s wisdom, or admire his good-

ness, till you have followed down, on the herald's list or the family chart, every point of his pedigree. Grant that there are hard passages in our faith, lists of names that cannot be reconciled, knotty queries; possibly places in revelation, as there are chasms and gulfs in nature, we may try in vain to fathom, or to link together, or bridge over. But, meantime, shall we not inspect the great qualities of the religion, examine its intrinsic beauty, observe its internal strength, taste and cultivate its precious fruits? Shall we not walk about Zion, consider her bulwarks, mark her palaces, behold her towers, and, having compared her glory with all beside of ancient rearing or modern growth, tell it to the generation following?

Once more, for our own moral health too, we need not only that intellectual stir, which is the ever-echoing boast of our times, but some repose also of spirit. It touches to the quick of our being to have persuasions in which our soul can be rooted, and from which our character can spring, instead of being borne in a barren whirl through a notional universe. Neither is it past hope, that we may have, each one, a clear form and distinct body of religion, large enough to escape all harm to others' liberty, while stopping short of profitless disputation. There is at least no mental sacrifice in the trial. The nobler qualities of our nature do not expand and advance in the pure void of our own conceptions, but in that at once resisting and uplift-

ing medium of an actual faith and worship, which more than atones for its restraints by its emancipations. An overweening assurance of being right, joined with unbrotherly feeling or selfish passion, begets, indeed, the vice of intolerance; but intolerance itself, turned against those who have forsaken the work of a party-zealotry, denies its own nature, and becomes with them not seldom the ugly mother of a beautiful child of charity. Those, driven off from some little pale and enclosure of communion, are, by a holy revenge, made kind-hearted and hospitable to all. Like the issue from certain frozen cordials of increased sweetness and strength, or the flow of the must of new wine from the crushing of the grapes, is the free run out of a frosty creed, or, from beneath the pressure of persecution, of their genuine friendship. The heart thanks them for their noble utterances and their courageous corresponding actual procedure. Nay, with no sectarian joy or partisan ambition, the heart thanks God for raising them in the little ranks of some special order to be the honors of our common nature, and leaders of the host of humanity.

Whatever may be the evils in an imposition of exact religious methods, to understand the worth also of such methods, one need only be occasionally in a region where no Christian institutions are observed; but the indiscriminated days glide on in continual attention to worldly cares, while the general tone of thought is unbraced with listless-

ness, or let down into imbecility ; and, with no feet moving or standing in even beauty together to own what is above, the community falls laterally apart, each member to walk in his own separate, uncheered path through the world. It is one thing to be slaves to routine, and another to be animated by a decent order of divine service ; one thing to be idolatrous of the letter, and another to be truly evangelical ; one thing to be rationalistic schemers, and another to be reasonable men ; and Christianity's real proposition to us is of the happy side of every such alternative.

What may be called the formal part of our religion is, moreover, but a vehicle of the moral and the spiritual. No ritual, of course, is to be sustained for its own sake, but only in behalf of that spiritual elevation, which is the glory of our nature, and only enchantment of the world ; and beside which all that time and space contain is of no account, but as its means. As an ethereal essence is guarded for use in a phial ; as the elemental forces of nature, from their diffusion through the universe, are made at special points to strike and flash on our senses ; so is it with the divine power through the agency of the Christian services. A lifeless administration or deathly inattention may despoil them of their virtue ; but their fit and natural effect is to initiate the mind into a stronger sense of eternal realities than could arise from any ethical teaching. Undoubtedly, such services as at present ordered will

at length fall away from the soul in the vast spiritual progress of future stages of his being. Nevertheless are they suited to train successive human generations, and especially to lead on children to their first perceptions of invisible reality, though they would not suffice to conduct one advancing intellect, supposed to remain on earth through all the duration of the church.

It is to be counted, too, as a great benefit of the rites of religion, that they operate to keep the spiritual in its proper precedence to the merely moral, and thus to insure the best morality on the basis of the noblest sentiments. The soul can no more than the songster, flying yonder in the summer-day, weave its nest out of its own bosom, but only from the material God provides. We must, indeed, know men by their fruits. But, in order to good fruit, the first thing is a good tree. The gardener's anxiety centres primarily on the seed he shall plant, or the slip he shall set out in his nursery. So what is most necessary to our virtue is that germ of a right disposition towards God, which comes from the exercises of his worship.

Again, let me say, this is the only way of joy to a human soul. The soul has no lasting pleasure in any thing, by its own endeavor or works of righteousness, it can be or do. We talk of self-satisfaction, but there is no such thing. No sinner surely was ever satisfied with himself in his poor pasture of husks: never, certainly, was any saint!

The more he accumulates merits, the less his comfort in contemplating them as his own. To his vision, purged through the very growth of his spirituality and progress into the light of higher conceptions and ideals of goodness, they lose their gaudy color; they will not wear the robe of self-complacency; in all their amount and grandeur, they look but like splendid failures and masses of imperfection in his own eyes. He adopts the poet's cry,

"Forgive my sins; forgive my virtues too, —
Those smaller sins, half converts to the right."

Wonderfully, by this spiritual attitude of worship, made wonted and secure by the forms and acts of worship, God holds his children, for sustenance, to his own bosom; provides for their humility even in their improvement; whets the conscience to aggravated demands with every upward step; makes it more tender to remaining evil with increasing worth; hides remorse in our excellence as much as in our depravity; goads it with stings of memory to the leap of self-abandonment into the peace of his arms; and thus causes our self-depreciation to become not passive despair, like the wavering motion with which the exhausted bird circles heavily to the ground, but only like its lowly stoop, skimming down for a new impulse, with rested wings, to soar up into heaven.

Such is the testimony of all the converted or

sanctified; a testimony rising not only in the still seclusion of the temple, but coming through the vexed atmosphere of politics, as on the last breath of the statesman who has weathered bravely the gales of half a century, towering above his antagonists, yet, as he lingers through slow disease towards death, renounces all his fame to pray for some gentle breeze from heaven to waft him home. Verily, on "the sightless couriers of the air," a good message for our guidance! But, if we go down into the depths of our own souls, there, after all our toil and gain, we feel vacant and famished, till, from our own deeds, we resort to God's worship, and hear him saying, "Give me thy heart." Giving our heart to him, he retains it in no misty absorption and loss of our consciousness, but gives it back to us, now no longer destitute and like a deserted chamber, but worth our having, and worth our giving to one another.

Accordingly, I trust, it will appear, in the opening of my particular themes, more fully than I can here explain, that the Christian body and form, being equidistant from any plan of fanaticism on the one hand, and any coldness of inhuman unconcern for our fellow-creatures on the other, is adapted to foster all the good and live affections that lie between; exciting fraternal feeling towards others, and exercising, by the lowliness of devotion and love, all hate and scorn; for reckoning not on ourselves, but on God alone, will make us kind and tolerant to

men. There is an old fable, of one who perished admiring his own beauty reflected to him from a fountain. Nor could there be a surer way of moral destruction, than making favorable contrasts of our rectitude with that of others. The Holy Ghost, chief thing for which we pray, does no such business for us as this. It is but the miserable doing of our atheistic self-love, one of those works of our own by which we cannot be saved. That esteem of ourselves which is, conversely, severity of judgment to our fellow-creatures, is no gift from on high, but the inspiration of our own pride and vanity; and, while launching bolts of denunciation against another, it more fatally smites us with the recoil of the weapon. The fanatic is "hoist with his own petard." Then, when, beyond lonely egotism, a proud company of people banded together, however numerous, but one shred torn from the whole body and membership of Christ, come to think themselves alone heirs of salvation, and venture to doom all beside to ruin, no subtle change is wrought in the quality of the wrong and irreligious feeling they manifest, by reason of the number of those through whom it is displayed. The guilt of a presumptuous conceit is not diminished, but only accumulated, by being so widely shared. Contrary to that genius of devotion I invoke, it is but a wretched multiplication of self-worship and a strange permutation of self-love. It is still the same vanity swelling into arithmetical progression, and

trying to lose its own shame in hiding behind its neighbor. It is no sword of the Lord against his foes, but a galvanic battery of unchristian arrogance against his children. It inaugurates that peculiar style of speech in which so frequently recur the words "we" and "us," as indicating the authority to which all should be referred. We read that a disciple of Christ once said to him, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him because he followeth not us." Truly, the Master's immediate rebuke might still well fall on many ears! Could we, in this connection, get rid of those little words, the church would be disabused of most of its sorrows and sins. For, surely, the object is not for others to approach or follow us, but for us all to approach and follow after Christ. This the whole form and temper of his gospel, inclining us to charity as well as purity, would lead us to do.

With no vocation or disposition to say a hard word of any body of professors, so much cannot, without offence both to truth and charity, which is not blind to the truth, be forborne. Blameless, indeed, and praiseworthy should we hold the earnestness of each believer, or association of believers, in the advocacy of cherished convictions, and in opposition to all that may be accounted dangerous error. They would not surrender their loyalty by respect to all difference of opinion sustained with equal earnestness. For it is not a sameness of creed,

which, under the broad Christian faith and fellowship, preserves the unity any more than the efficiency of our religion; but rather in free gradations is the very constitution of harmony.

But our subject, that has borne us into such reflections, brings us back from all calculation of wide effects, and insists mainly on a personal application. We cannot wait for our deliverance and devotion till all men are justly disposed, and moving at the Leader's word. To our own disposition and motion must we attend. On some great day of jubilee and procession through the streets, we may have looked on, and marvelled to see how long it took to get the world into order; how long for every company and division to arrive at its rank, and take up its proper march. Never the less for the general confusion and slowness, the straggling departure, or disorderly crash, did it become each one, instead of spending his time in star-gazing astonishment, to hasten to his own place, and go on doing his own part. Be it not, however, forgotten that the part of each one is for the common advance; and that, while religion should be a persuasion in every man's mind and a production in every man's life, its genius is essentially social, binding individual needs and efforts in concert for the common salvation; contemplating never a private glory, but the universal necessity, and making its perfection not that of an isolated soul, but of a general humanity. It urges us not to retire from

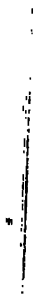
our kind, and pick our own separate way, but, disallowing all our cold and haughty self-reliance, prompts us to move with united tread; feeling and giving on all sides the fraternal responsive pulse of combined strength, as we seek the same victory, and travel to the same home. It directs us to save ourselves from ruin, not alone or chiefly by moral carefulness and wary attention to our own fate, as one strikes out by himself from the burning or sinking ship, leaving the mass of wild and struggling misery behind,—but puts our own deliverance into the love of God and all his creatures. Uniting conscience with sympathy, it wears a double crown, in which the brightness of purity glows with the warmth of every good affection; and it has a form and body instinct with its spirit and life. Joining the host of God's elect, consenting to its divine order, and consecrating ourselves to the purpose of its expedition, we shall at least be serene in the light of his countenance. He shall, amid all diversities and contentions, send his angel of good cheer to stand beside us, and, through all the dark, to point to the vanishing forms of sin and the fleeing spectres of woe. The ill demons that infest our quiet, when we lean on our own arm, with disconsolate and desperate attempt to heal our sins and cure the plagues of mankind, shall disappear before the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his power. The low facts and miserable circumstances of human life shall cease and fall away, as we lift

our eye to the effulgence of his holiness. The private sorrows that deject us, like hard masters and cruel giants, binding and scourging us in solitude, shall retreat from the conscious glory in us of his presence. The reviving beams, that kindle our hearts, shall shoot out to scatter darkness from the face of the earth, and into the future advance omens of the yielding of all the powers of Satan to a divine and eternal reign.

But, be it not forgotten, all this, under God, depends on an appreciation, not only of the mere blank design of the gospel, but of the wisdom with which, in the form and manner of its proceeding, it addresses itself to its design, and of the demand it makes therein for our co-operation. The absolute, intrinsic cause of all that is intended or desired for human redemption, to make earth happy or open the door of heaven, is matchless and perfect. It only requires to be attached to those vehicles which shall bear it, in us and in all men, to its appropriate effects.

It but remains to say, what my readers will notice, that the subjects, whose treatment I have thus introduced, beginning with those religious modes and ministrations in the habits of the Christian community, which young and old everywhere together, under one or another variation of them, witness or partake, open at last into some larger themes, in which the body may seem to become spiritual, and the gospel-form refined and expanded,

without losing its distinctiveness, melts into identity with the gospel-idea as a mode of truth, rather than of external custom or observance. I trust it will not appear that this transition leads me away from the proper treatment of my whole subject, as I do not contradict the philosophic sense, lying in my own mind, of the title which I have chosen ; as the outward shape of Christianity is nearly allied to its inward quality ; and as, I believe, the succeeding discourses only pass over the just degrees of this union, so as fairly to disclose the vital and organic power of our religion. Feeling that, in all, I have but hinted at one particular posture of a great theme, — to the friends found by a former book, and to all who, for aught I have said, may find Christianity made more sacred and dear, I dedicate this volume.



DISCOURSE I.

ORDINANCES.

LUKE i. 6. — AND THEY WERE BOTH RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD, WALKING IN ALL THE COMMANDMENTS AND ORDINANCES OF THE LORD BLAMELESS.

THERE is something remarkable in what the evangelist here mentions for the ground of his eulogy. The persons to whom he refers had not only, he tells us, lived a good moral life, but had also discharged the established offices of their religion. They had kept its holy days, sought its consecrated places, offered its appointed sacrifices, lifted up its choral psalms, and bowed in its regular and lowly prayers. And was this a reason why they should be so praised, — for observing a seventh day, going into the doors of a synagogue, carrying up doves and lambs to an altar, and still walking in this daily circle, continued, with occasional variations, through the annual round? Was such punctiliousness to be esteemed meritorious, even in addition to such a thing as private purity? What did it signify, this stated course of external proceeding, done or not done? It signified their reverence for God. It

was their hearts' language to their Maker. It was the way they told to their Author, and the Lord of their people and of the whole earth, their thankfulness, penitence, and worship. Why should not this sincere expression be as much worth, and as clear a basis of commendation, as any personal virtue? Why should a moral act of kindness or honesty be more accounted of than a ritual act of devotion, or a word of veracity or good temper on earth be more needful than an expression of truth and loyalty to heaven? Are the principles of righteousness less involved in our bearing towards our Creator than in our deportment to a fellow-man? Truly it may be doubted if any one can show us why the whole language of an unfeigned recognition and adoration, in ancient or modern times, of invisible powers, by offerings, kneelings, and prostrations, by poetry and song, by just penance and expiation, does not proceed as deep from the soul as any worldly honor or civil integrity.

These days in which we live are days of much contempt or indifference for the wonted forms and exercises of religion. We have grown to be very spiritual in these latter times. Not a few have, in the phrase now in vogue, got to be above ordinances. Set hours, and dedicated courts, and fixed orders of performance, and public demonstrations of reverence, are a kind of beggarly elements with them. This aversion to appearance and exhibition, however, applies only to matters of religion. I

they can witness anywhere a display of genius in other things; if they can listen to this world's eloquence, feed their intellect with its art, or please their fancy with its show, they go eager and stay content. As for the rest, it is chaff and dross and refuse. Of coming to church that they may give to the Almighty his due, they do not dream. If they can get entertainment or information better otherwise, they will not frequent the sanctuary. If their children would rather read or play or idle than engage in the supplication and instruction of God's house, they are allowed to wander or remain at home. This disparagement of religious forms and services, wherever existing or suffered, with the young or the old, is not well, and cannot come to good.

But one will say, "If I am upright, a man of my word, just in my dealings, and temperate in my habits, of what moment is it that I should join to this sum and substance of excellence an outward ceremonial?" It is doubly momentous, I answer, because it becomes you to be a religious as well as a moral man; and because, furthermore, social as well as private religion is the duty of man and the security of the world. Man owes worship to his Maker not only as an individual, but as a community; and it is not safe that the public worship he owes should be thus slighted, nor wise that our own pleasure should be preferred. This public worship, this solemn, joint acknowledgment of God which

we propose, God himself asks, and all human history proves the importance of rendering. By it, a restraining, saving power has descended into the erring human heart, through all climes and ages. It is hard indeed to tell whether this practice of worship is greater as a defence or as a positive blessing. Remove it, and in the flood of mischief that would roll and the gulf of ruin that would yawn, we should, at least, as in some territory desolated by the rage of the overflowing river, or in the ruins gathered at the spot whence a warning sea-mark has been washed away, see where had stood the bank against the tides of human passion, and what had held back the race from wreck and disaster. The poet, relating the wondrous tale how sin first came on earth, says the evil spirit made for man's first journey a road from this world to the regions of destruction, that the descent might be easy. Ah! that road, however constructed, is still smooth and broad; some evil spirit is ever busy to keep it in repair, and hosts are running and enticing to run down its open passages; while temples and sabbaths and sacred rites do none too much, as directions and guides, to clear the other road to God and holiness and heaven. The traveller finds the path strait, rough, and stony up to the mountain-top, which he needs all assistance to reach; while the ways into the comfort and population of the globe are wide, inviting, and easy.

I certainly would not brand as reasonless and

unaccountable all disgust at ecclesiastic customs that may anywhere obtain. When the simplicity of the gospel is overlaid with the inventions of man, and a minute multiplication of mechanical methods is made essential to salvation; and quarrels, in proportion to their subject preposterously warm and extensive, are kindled about robes and candles, and wordings and postures; when shapes of superfluous and unauthorized emblems, of oil and salt and incense, are trivially used to play various artificial parts beside the truly beautiful water of baptism, by Christ received and sanctioned, and a wafer is turned into a deity for the bread he meant as a memorial of his life and symbol of his spirit, — it is not wonderful, perhaps, that some should be driven into a distaste for the whole subject of church customs and traditions. Yet this is but the other extreme: This is confounding the whole field with certain limited aspects. This is trying to become wise by an inversion or exchange of folly. Repugnance may mislead as well as superstition, and Puritanic bareness be as unedifying as Romish or Episcopal pomp.

But, it is said, we love a spiritual religion. Allow me, then, to ask, what is a spiritual religion but a religion that makes men spiritual? Are you therefore spiritual for your neglect of the Christian institutions? Does your experience or your observation find spiritual life flowing from such a source? Is it spirituality or worldliness that is most apt to in-

dulge itself with a dispensation of absence from the house, and disregard of the worship, of God? Does the beauty of holiness or the stamp of some earthly aim most commonly mark the mind that forsakes this grave and noble service going out of our common nature and common heart? Is there not, in short, more of fancy and speculation, than of sentiment or principle, in the piety that scorns ordinances? and does not some poor votary of the shrine of prayer, who, confined to her solitary room by illness, Bible and hymn-book in hand, keeps pace with the procedure of the congregation's praise, soar far higher into the real heaven? To whom is the celestial paradise and kingdom of heaven most likely to be a figure of speech, and not a matter of fact,—to the faithful attendant with those that keep holy time, or to the willing absentee from their assembly?

There is a danger of formalism, and there is a vice of hypocrisy. But our prevailing tendency is to be more pre-occupied with the lower affairs of this mundane sphere than even with the pretence of devotion; and some sordid savor, some smell of the earth or vulgar leaning, may commonly be perceived in the strong man who despises or declines from "walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord," and withholds payment of his public debt, like the Jew whom God, by the prophet, reproved with robbing him in tithes and offerings. The truth is, it is not according to our

nature that our religious thoughts and purposes should be either exercised happily or grow vigorously, as mere abstractions wholly within the mind. The faculties of the soul, subjectively working separate from actual occasions, soon become like the upper and nether millstones grinding unrelieved and wastefully upon each other. The holiest emotions ask a vent, and would burst out through some channel to their object with healthy ebb and flow, giving their tribute and taking back refreshment and nourishment. Such a reciprocal action, and, of course, some method by which it may go on, is, by a law of our being, made essential to the soundness and cheerfulness of our inward state. Some moving observance and administration of an appointed rite has not seldom been an infinite consolation,—a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul, even to the end of life.

Not as a superstition or weakness, then, but among the graces and virtues of the character, may be justly counted a love of holy times and places and things. So, indeed, nature herself, the heart's own instinct, decides. For who esteems a man the more for being destitute of this feeling, and owning no such association as made David's heart yearn for the stones of Zion, and her dust dear unto him; nay, led our Saviour himself, on the sabbath-day, as his custom was, into the synagogue, in the town where he had been brought up, to open the book of the law and read? If the royal singer of

Israel, and his greater descendant, could light the flame of their aspirations with that ancient fuel of letter and form and ordinance, — he may be considered a mistaken, vain-glorious, or imprudent man, who, from any hatred of old priestly corruptions, or offence at existing clerical pride, or supposition of a personal superiority, not needing foreign influence, loses or throws away the advantage of such habitual suggestives of those invisible and eternal realities, of which we are not too often reminded, and which we do not powerfully enough feel press on the heart and control the life.

Will any one still say it does not strike him so seriously? Will he allege, that, for his own part, he can afford to be slack on these points; and that he will, for his trust, fare forth into the unbounded freedom of reason and nature? Ah! that measureless field of reason and nature is too large to protect us. We are lost, we perish in it! Just as the whole great ball of the earth, with the vast spread of the atmosphere, is not a shelter for us; but to preserve the body, guard health, and lengthen life, we must build a house on it against the wildness and the storm: so the house of God is our necessary retreat from the bleakness of an unfathomed universe, from tempests of mortal trial, and the winter of death. As, when the first snow falls, and the north wind blows, every one rejoices in his roof and his hearth; so may we in the eaves of the sanctuary, and that fire of the Holy Ghost they

cover. To run away from these, relying on nature and reason for a refuge, is like seeking the craggy, icy, and blustering peaks for a dwelling. Some young men lately went forth, thinly clad, and trusting to themselves to reach the summit of one of our loftiest hills. When they started, the sun was warm, the breeze soft, the path grassy, and all was inviting. But soon the zephyr turned to a blast, and the sunshine seemed stiffening to frost, and the way had become flint, and the unmoving granite rocks around them seemed to be terribly working a petrification of stupor and death within. Benumbed and overwearied, they sat down to weep, and, had not assistance come to them, would have surely died. So is it with solitary wanderers in the light of their own minds through this mysterious creation towards the incomprehensible eternity. The beginning flatters and allures, but the powers of nature fail on the ascent. The progress is deviation; and the end, bewilderment and death. Names from among the living and the departed alike might be given in melancholy illustration of so untoward a destiny.

But, once more, it may be said, these external forms and ordinances are surely not the object or end of religion, and therefore deserve from us no such earnest attention. True, they are not the end. The end is the spirit's everlasting consecration to God and duty. But, if the end is important, are not the means important? If the reality and essence

be of supreme concern, shall we despise the steps by which we may attain to it? On this ladder the angels, now pure ethereal flames, went up, not spurning the degrees by which they rose, and we must ascend. The way worn by so many passing generations should be to us only the more dear. This general plea stands, of course, independent of any particular criticism of the varieties of service and procedure in different portions of the Christian church. Rome or London or Geneva may have each one its own peculiarity of religious manners. We have our order, handed down to us by our fathers with no overloading weight of ceremony, no excessive number of exercises, and no tedious consumption of time. It is as simple as the New Testament. It is the least we can do in testimony of our social allegiance to God, and fidelity to his Son. The heathens thought their gods would be angry, and national misfortunes befall, if the sacrifices were withheld. We may count this a superstition, or smile at it as a pleasant fable. But we cannot imagine the true and living God will be pleased with a contempt of the worship he has ordained, and the rites his representative Messiah has sanctioned; or that any benefit can follow in the morality, happiness, and peace of a people, by whom so reasonable a service is slept over, wearied of, or set aside. If we will not turn all the sacred traditions of the gospel, the work of the revealing spirit and divine providence, into a pile of vanity,

hither then let us come to pay our holy tribute together to our Author. Let us be drawn by no curiosity, by no ear itching for novel doctrine or exciting appeal, but by our desire and necessity to acknowledge in common the common Maker of our frame and Giver of our mercies. Let us intend, not general cultivation of our minds, or an agreeable way of passing the hour, but worship,—whole, undivided, universal, Christian worship,—worship, not only in the hymn and the express devotions, but in the sermon too, which should but set forth those ideas and laws of the Most High, in mutually meditating and submitting to which we put up a more acceptable respect than any perfume of spices, or smoke of burnt sacrifice. This is here our business. Can we not do this? Can we not find for ourselves and our children a worth, a beauty, and honor in doing it? Nay, can the very sense of religion in the heart, binding man's brotherhood to God's fatherhood, suffer us to be content with doing any thing less?

We will not be formalists. Verily, it is not our chief peril. We will not think the regeneration of an innocent child, or its entrance into heaven, is suspended on the sprinkling of water from mortal hands over a spotless spirit. Yet may we discern significance and power in the act of dedication, which, from the infancy of our religion, presses the life of the church into the parent's offering, with vows and tears, of what is most precious on earth

his eyes can behold, even the child whom he may therefore train more carefully, and lead to adopt his own solemnized deed and purpose. So it were not only vanity, but moral enervation and corruption, to suppose that mere partaking of the bread and wine of the communion will guard us against evil, and repel the wiles of Satan with the sort of virtue once imagined to reside in charms and amulets worn upon the person. The shield of faith only can quench all the fiery darts of the devil; and something divine and Christ-like in the inmost temper must resist infection from the plague of sin and the evil that is in the world. But if the ordinance, which grief and sickness and death have participated; which confessors' tears and martyrs' blood have embalmed, when observed in the soul's sincerity after the Master's request, can unquestionably nourish this temper, and strengthen us to grasp this shield,—with what respect for wisdom or righteousness do so many go away from and neglect it?

A late writer has said that the Congregational Church has degenerated into an audience. If it be an audience, let it be an audience that listens to the word of God, hearkens to the whisper of his spirit, and breathes responses from its own common soul. Let it not be an audience of cold units, of isolated, self-conscious individuals, unacceptable to the Father, wherever met, in whatever building on the earth; but let it be converted into a church by

united love of God, and respect for the monuments of Christ's religion.

Let us never deem these monuments a mere form, antiquated and obsolete; which they are not, unless sacrilegiously so made by our impiety or unconcern. Let us not say, moral and spiritual excellence is alone worth our thought, and then absurdly violate our conclusion by being blindly ignorant of the path over which we must travel in order that this ideal excellence may be reached. Let the house of God, with all it holds and conveys, challenge from us its own exclusive and exceeding honor. It may be humbly built of the same earth and timber as a common dwelling, or outshone by the granite and gilding of a warehouse or railroad station. Still is it reared for purposes of a loftier pitch and more enduring glory; and the triumph proper to it is no sectarian triumph, no private ambition in pulpit or pew, but the triumph of Him whose right it is to reign.

DISCOURSE II.

THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Eph. iv. 4. — THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT.

THE word *body* is often in the New Testament used in a peculiar sense. Jesus, breaking the bread of the last supper to his disciples, says to them, "This is my body." The whole church of his followers is afterwards in the Epistles repeatedly called his body. Paul tells the Colossians that the old Jewish festivals and ceremonies were but a shadow of Christ's body.

What is this body of Christ, of which in the Scriptures so much mention is made? It evidently is not his literal flesh, the material members of a physical system dissolved and long since passed away; but something substantial, and enduring on earth after he died and rose and ascended to heaven. All the expressions used can be satisfied by no thought but this, that Christ's body means whatever embodies his mind, whether it be the works he did, the words he said, or the institutions he established. Our text, "There is one body and one

spirit," confirms this understanding by the natural analogy its correlative terms present.

We have said and heard much of Christ's spirit, by which, of course, is meant all that is wise and good and holy in his moral attributes, every lovely and winning grace of his character. Now, the body of Christ is whatever contains and to our apprehensions realizes these; makes his spirit, with all its beautiful qualities, vital and operative. Whatever on earth caught and retained his heaven-descended temper; whatever became here below the medium of its communication, or opened a passage for it to shine and flow, to stay and work in the world,—whether it were a recorded word or an oral tradition, a living soul or an appointed ordinance,—that was and is his body.

We thus see the importance of Christ's body. May it not be said that the body is as necessary as the spirit, and necessary in order that we may come to and get the spirit? As, in the external world, it is not the absolute greatness or beauty of things that moves us, but only that amount of their greatness and portion of their beauty which may be made appreciable through our senses to our minds; so, of the intrinsic and wonderful spirit of Christ, what is sensibly conducted to us can alone touch and renew the heart. So much has been of late monotonously spoken about the spirit of Christ, that it may be feared it has been converted with many into a phrase without meaning, or having only a

very vague import. Many seem, indeed, hardly to know what they themselves understand by it, whether any thing definite in the life of Jesus; or how they should distinguish the language they use from any other general phraseology, such as the spirit of the times, or the genius of civilization; or what discrimination there is between the spirit of Christ and the plans and progress of this nineteenth century, or how it is differenced from the prevalent feeling in any club or band of friendly associates; nay, even from any agreeable disposition in an individual breast. Amid this confusion, is it not time to reflect that we cannot perceive or define Christ's spirit, save in and through Christ's body, or the concrete historic substance of his being; through his person and deportment, his discourses and deeds, his gospel and church, the baptism he was baptized with, and the cup he drank? Destroy or lose sight of these, and the spirit flies and escapes our grasp, no more to be embraced by us than a shade; just as the soul of a man departs when his body is dead, and only by the manifestations that have been made through it can we know where, or what manner of man, he is.

We thus see, from a special point of view, the value of religion in its institutions and rites, its holy times and places, the sabbath and the temple, the bowl and the table, as well as in its abstract ideas of truth and its pure suggestions of duty. For these visible and established things are the body, in

which the invisible glories of the gospel are held, and by which they are conveyed. The precious odor which is not enclosed is dissipated; the treasure is liable to loss or plunder, if locked in no casket: so the essence even of piety evaporates, and the riches of immortal value are scattered, when not put into our possession in some solid and abiding shape. Although this fragrance of goodness and this wealth of moral power are to be carried with us whithersoever we go, to adorn human life, to replenish and gladden the whole earth; yet, to renew the stores we thus bear through our pilgrimage, must we resort ever afresh to the great fund and divine fountain in the Heaven-ordained and imperishable body of Christ.

Brethren, in our perhaps unthinking talk of the spirit, have we not lost the spirit by overlooking the body? Take an illustration from this pleasant light of day, which since the dawn has been pouring so beautifully around us. It is not only needful there should be in the universe a diffused, general quality of light, but a source, a body of light in the sun, — a fire fed there by ever-new fuel laid on by the almighty hand; and then the bright, unfading gleam will go forth to warm the wide creation, to glance on the remotest orb, and illumine the path of the myriad families of God. But break that golden urn, trust to any universal radiance that has gone forth, or to any indefinite quality of light lurking here and there, and, after a while, the

dancing atoms would all have travelled by; lamp after lamp in the vault of heaven would turn pale, flicker, and go out; and over the scene would creep the shadows of darkness, in which every living thing would grope and perish. So despise the institutions and ordinances of religion, veil in doubt the hand of miracle, with your scepticism unstring the sweet and far-ringing harp of prophecy, with some late free-thinkers make the New Testament a myth or half-fabulous story, confound the sabbath with the week, empty forth from the broken font the baptismal water, sweep the bread and wine from the board of communion, style what eighteen hundred years ago was written in the Holy Covenant dead letter; or, to sum up all this destruction in one image, break or desert the bright and glorious urn of the Sun of righteousness, and confide alone in any generalities of wisdom and conceits of philosophy, in any pantheistic speculations or pretended absolute religion, — and how soon would moral darkness cover the earth, and gross darkness the people!

No, we must have Christ's body as well as his spirit. We must have his body that we may have his spirit. His spirit is identified with him, with his person and precepts and institutes. It was not a mere wandering breeze that for a moment played through him, like the air through organ-pipes while a hymn is sung; but something fixed and living in him, for which we must go to him, which is found incarnate in his life and eloquent on his lips, as our

own imagination could never shape or reason infer it. For Christ's religion is an actual as well as an ideal religion, and truly and efficiently ideal because actual. As the fair and grand scenes of nature, when beheld afresh, ever convince us anew that we do not, according to the poetic fancy, create them, but rather that they present a beauty to us up to which our minds must stretch and grow; so the facts of Christianity give us our types and patterns of moral beauty and spiritual loveliness to make real in our life.

Do I not here touch an error which has prevailed a good deal among ourselves in our general religious connection and modes of thinking? Are there not many inclined to say, "It matters not whether I go to church or not; whether I read the Bible or not; whether I observe family or private prayers or not; whether I have my children baptized or not; whether, in the ordinance of the supper, I commemorate and commune with my Saviour or not. All these things are but forms, accidental and unessential, needless if not superstitious. I, for my part, will have the religion of a wise and thinking, spiritual man or woman, and not cumber my intelligence with the burden of other persons' ignorance, or stoop to creep along their childish ways." Ah, my friends! were all this claim as modest as it is clear; were it a just assumption, and not an unconscious satire; if we could have that intrinsic wisdom, pure spirit, and godlike understanding and

goodness it supposes, then the outward observance might be unnecessary, or injuriously obstruct the way. But let us ask our hearts and our habits, let us ask our lives, let us ask those inclinations which go actively with us through the day, sleep only at night with our slumber, and wake with our refreshment, — if we have thus reached the end, mounted the height, and really require no more means, guidance, or furtherance. If life and heart and spotless purpose give no such full, honest, and affirmative answer, may we not conclude that we too need to look to the body of Christ, even as the holy apostles humbly and prayerfully looked, to revive in us, by a frequent stimulus and ever-new supply, the so-soon wasted energy of devotion, of practical purity, and an unoffending conscience?

While, in many quarters among us, in the unloosing of old authority and the uncertainty of new proceeding, nature is confounded by many an empty abstraction, and curious schemes of improvement are proposed to draw the human soul out of its very instincts, and an uneasy ambition with a love of change gives birth to some constantly new plan, loudly boasted as the cure of all evils till it is in its turn displaced by another, — it is truly desirable to know if there be some common and permanent resource, some fountain of peace and refreshment, that does not, like the false mirage, shift its place and withdraw its illusory brim and tempting draught, but flows with ever uniform supply.

Verily, such a resort is nowhere provided, save in the body of Christ.

I would not adopt, far less attempt to impose, the particular technical and narrow idea of Christ's body, in that puny and corpse-like stature in which, in some connections, it appears; but contemplate it in the largeness, celestial beauty, and humane generosity of its own blessed shape; in all those things, in taking up which for his body, his spirit showed its marvellous power. Far away as we reckon earthly space, I would see it in midnight mountain prayers, in Gethsemane prostrations, on the cross, in the journey to Emmaus; now with more than prophetic dignity in the Jewish synagogue, and anon along the waves that bent for a floor to his feet, or foamed and burst over the side of his vessel, or sank into calm at his word; where the sick were healed, the mourning comforted, and the dead raised; wherever his spirit came forth to be lodged in his action, enshrined in the circumstances of his career, and preserved as mankind's great heritage for all ages; — there I would behold his body, the container and expresser of his spirit, by which we can rise up to and drink of it; for in vain has Christ lived in the world, or now lives in heaven, unless we can reach him, and so live by him.

Moreover, let me say, it is no strange or arbitrary principle that I here unfold: only the extraordinary and superhuman quality of the being and influence

in question may give it some singularity of application. But, in truth, it is the law of all life and action, as our own hearts and homes demonstrate. It is, for instance, the spirit of our kindred and friends that is most dear to us; but is not the body, the form and face and voice, precious too, as bringing us into acquaintance with that spirit, and transporting to us its wealth of power and love? And even when the body dies, and falls into cold and senseless clay at our side, we do not spurn or set it at naught like other clay. We remember it was the body. It is no clod; but still in every feature and lineament, where intellect and affection once played and yet seemed to linger, it appears interwoven and overflowed with all we have prized and delighted in. It speaks of the familiar and beloved spirit, as whose dwelling it demands our tender regard and reverent handling; while, as with awful gravity of respect, that no royalty can command and no trifling procedure must abate, or novel trickery disguise, we take up and honor and celebrate, even in dusty burial, the frame once containing it; the spirit itself we behold transferred to another spiritual and celestial body above: for, as reason and Scripture both declare, we shall doubtless have some body for our spirit to abide in for ever.

Indeed, the relation, on which proceeds the idea of this discourse, is involved in all our thought, and penetrates to the very roots of our nature. Every

thing inward and real, every thing growing and lasting, must have its expression, and somehow be bodied forth. The poet, in language which, in some sense, we can accept, says, even of the Infinite One, —

“All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul.”

Each living principle in the universe takes its own body, — in proportion to its own power a strong body, — through which alone it is expressed and known and operative to communicate its proper life. The great First Cause ever rushes from essence into existence, and shows himself in vast, various, and eternal shaping; all brightness, but the light of his face; all motion, but the trail of his clothing; and every natural sound, from the roar to the whisper, but some accent of his voice. The soul of a man, too, inevitably proves its quickness or ability in some grosser or finer visible sign and demonstration. It is not, indeed, always according to the size or muscular force of its fleshly covering. A great and fiery soul, making of a little stature only its conductor, actually embodies itself in great achievements, in civil revolutions, moral reforms, new institutions and laws; and it does this as naturally and inevitably as a potent germ of vegetable or animal life swells into mighty thews and sinews, or towers into a monarch of the woods. A vigorous germ of nationality puts itself forth into

an imposing figure on the face of the globe; from a little island stretches forth Briarean arms till it draws the earth under its girdle, or silently and heavily slips, like a glacier from Ural Mountains, to brace a hemisphere with the keen breath of its despotic sway. This is a fixed law. To the imaginary principle that cannot pronounce itself, like the child that has lost its tongue and cannot speak, we pay no heed. It exerts no influence, having no body. But a principle that has any energy makes to itself a body, and will keep that body alive; as it is sometimes seen that a strong will, inspired by genius or devotion into intense activity, preserves a human frame, which, under any imbecility of spirit added to its own weakness, would speedily slide into the grave.

It is an inveterate, ineradicable belief of the human mind, that good and bad demons, existing in the universe, are ready and apt to take form, and make of themselves some manifestation. But it is both faith and fact, that the greatest power ever sent by God into time displays itself in an unconquerable and imperishable form. Christ is the Son of God, and Christianity is the body of Christ; and Christ's body, in its unparalleled greatness and force, is his argument. The phenomenal figure and agency always mark and measure the efficient cause. We need not continually pore among musty records, and unearth old registers. Outthrust strata, and mountains bubbling up, tell what is at

work beneath. Take the vital and bodily power of any thing for a sign of its quality, and sponsor for its birth, as you would the depth and breadth and speed of the river for the great perennial flow of the source you never groped into, or took mathematical measures of, from which it springs. If other depths issue in no streams, refresh no homes, spread from their deposit no fertile fields, and build up on banks, fashioned for their own course, no villages and towns, nor bear along through the world any freight of human comfort or treasure or hope, then it signifies not to boast their purity, or reason of their profundity. The institutions of Christianity are the evidences of Christianity; not dead, but living witnesses.

Christ's body, then, — composed, not of fleshly organs and articulate members, nor of Christian rites only, but also of the living members of his church, his true followers from the day of his call to the fishermen until now; for our very souls, subtle and invisible, as inspired and trained by him, belong to his body; — this body, I say, as the means of our edifying and salvation, in all its traits and proportions claims our respect. Every clear and permanent display of his truth, strength, and purity, is part of it. The very walls of this temple, gathering something of the hoar look of age upon them, — the places here where those sat who were truly joined to him, — the holy service, which has travelled over the globe farther than any one foot

or single generation of man has gone,—the plate and cup, from which the symbolic bread and wine have been taken into hands and lips now cold and still,—the one sacred day in seven, which has punctually returned ever since the earth, as man's social habitation, was made, though the resurrection of Christ, as a signal of its grandeur, was mighty to change that day's place for the light of his own returning countenance ; — these things, in their measure, grandly compose it. Its maturer cast is seen in the band of devoted men and women, who, in their several positions, regenerating and reforming the race, are faithful to Christ's righteous and benevolent cause. Its younger and more promising look may be beheld in the new generation of children, whom, at home or in the Sunday-school, we instruct and lead in the way of Christ's truth and precepts ; and in whom alone, thus informed, this old scarred and sickly world, out of all its chronic sins and invalid decrepitudes, can become whole and new.

If we neglect these things, speak of them scornfully, and treat them lightly, in common but deceptive and irreligious language, styling them mere forms, letting the body of Christ consumptively decay and dwindle among us, — we may talk complacently as we will of the spirit of Christ ; but it is the spirit of the world by which we shall be possessed and moved, and to whose usurpation we shall surrender the throne and lordship of our

hearts. The spirit of Christ, which can never be lost absolutely, will yet be lost for us. Absorbing business, engrossing pleasure, political ambition, party power, and private gain, will be the things securing our devotion, in their spirit and their body too. The street and the shop, the hall and the caucus, will be more attractive to us than the house or the worship of God, or the immortal realities they signify. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, — the evil spirit, all that is meant by the devil, — will have us, and, so far as depends on us, will have our children, the community, and the race. Ignorance and crime, heathenism at home and abroad, it will no more be within our ability to enlighten, reclaim, or convert. Mankind will be abandoned to themselves, losing the channel, and so losing the fountain, of the waters of life, and going down, hopeless and uncheered, into the valley and shadow of death. So baleful a consummation may God and our own souls forbid, by uniting us and all alive to the one body, and thus to the one spirit, of Christ!

DISCOURSE III.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

**Matt. xvi. 18. — UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND
THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.**

HERE is proof from Christ's own lips, that he came not only to reveal truth from heaven, but also to establish a church on earth; or that his object was not only to enlighten individual minds, but to unite his followers in affectionate fellowship together. This proof is sustained by the impression which his repeated declarations on this point made upon the hearts of his first disciples, and by the influence which his spirit exerted in actually drawing them into one company. I need scarcely refer to the striking figures, in which, by him or among themselves, the proper intimacy of their communion was expressed; such as the stones joined together closely in a building, the branches of a vine flourishing into common fruitfulness from the same root, and the members of a human body alive in friendly co-operation. So were they to be built up and grow and work from him, in unison with one another.

From all this Scripture, with the corresponding facts of the gospel-history, arises not only the principle and justification of the great universal church of Christ, now stretching through earth and heaven, but the conclusion that as Christians, in whatever particular place we may be, in evidence of our real relation to Jesus, of our possession of his faith and harmony with his feeling, we must form a church. We must not be a mere assemblage of individuals, gathered and scattered loosely like the sand, but a cemented fabric. We must not be like sundered limbs and severed boughs, each one given over to himself, but vitally bound to the body and the head, nourished from the living trunk, with one temper, like sap running through the tree in the freshening season of spring, or like flowing blood in our veins. So far as this is not true; so far as we, worshippers here, are cold to one another, distant from one another, and careless of one another's welfare; so far we are none of Christ's, belonging not to that church which he built on a rock.

It is often said, that religion addresses the soul in its pure individuality; that it is something between every man alone and his Maker; that hosts of numbers are as nothing, and no company is counted in the relations between the solitary heart and conscience and their sole original Fashioner and Inspirer. It is true that Christ speaks to us as individuals. More than any other teacher, he makes every one of us know that we are created

by God, immediately connected with him, personally responsible to him, and open to the secret warning and solicitation of his spirit; that we can hide from him in no crowd, and be shielded from him by no interposition. But, with equal explicitness and no inconsistency, he teaches that those who listen to his voice and receive his lessons, becoming like-minded in conscience and love, will be a band of believers and associated laborers to his honor, for their own and all men's salvation. It was as if he had said, "Those that have the persuasions I would communicate, and the affections I inspire, cannot keep apart. Their sympathy in the same ideas, duties, and hopes, will unavoidably attract them into one circle." Indeed, so firm did he hold to this proposition, as to use a metaphor at first seeming bold to audacity, but sure at last to be verified, — that against the church he would thus set up, the gates of hell, all the powers of sin and Satan, should not prevail. Sublime and touching prediction! which, involving the truth and credibleness of its author, should lead all, to whom the name of Christ sounds venerable and dear, to pay the tribute of their regard and warm adherence to the church, which, in the apostolic words, is but his fulness and body.

Yet let no one think to do this in any patronizing way. It is not so much for Christ's sake, to help him, as for our own, that we are called on to do it. We hear, indeed, persons, in a quite common phrase,

speak of supporting Christianity. Nay, Christianity supports them! It is not so much by our taking hold of religion, as by religion's taking hold of us, that the divine intent will be accomplished. Nor need we have any anxiety that the great Leader will not triumphantly make good his own word. For see in what glory and constancy of progress his prediction has already been fulfilled! The church, on whose foundation in himself he began to build, with as it were but a single stone in his hand, has, beyond all other positive institutions, defied and surmounted the powers of destruction. Great changes have taken place since Christ ventured that promise to a poor fisherman, and threw out into the air that challenge against fate. Many old customs have decayed. Whole systems of religion and philosophy have passed away. Famous cities have crumbled in the dust, and wild beasts have roamed, and birds of prey screamed over their ruins. Races of men have been dispersed, or are even now, in their last remnants, thinly melting into the grave which this earth has for nations as well as individuals. Yea, shores and seas have begun to shift their places, and everlasting hills have bowed their heads, since Jesus spoke to Peter on those now-forlorn coasts of Cesarea. But the gates of hell have not prevailed against his church. It has not only survived unhurt, as the promise implies, but has flourished and increased without decline; and, under various names, but with open

doors, still invites the sons of men, at once to the shelter of its walls, and through the openings of its aisles into paths of endless advancement.

But, though we are not, within the church, contemplated as mere individuals, this its invitation comes to every one by himself. Do we accept it? We cannot outwardly and visibly enter the whole church. It spreads round the globe. It reaches through ages. Almost the whole of it is invisible. The greater part of it is in the skies. But, as a huge army, stretching out of sight over the plain, is all near to one that joins it at a single point; so the church of Christ, in the fulness of its influence, is nigh to us in every little space where his temple is open, and his table furnished. As by a natural law the entire sphere of matter presses on every point, so the whole church of Christ is present and felt in its power wherever his friends meet to worship in his name, to partake the old memorials of his sufferings, and ever-fresh tokens of that love of his which died not with his expiring frame, but is still warm for all who will accept and return it.

The question is a serious one, and must have occurred to all thoughtful and religious persons, "Are we of the church of Christ?" To help you to consider or solve this question, I have to offer no logical definitions, no curious tests, no rigid articles of any private or sectarian creed of church-membership. Be the principles of the decision as large and liberal as our reason, in all its length and breadth, can lay

down, or as our freedom, in all the honest extent of its motion, may demand. The soul which, won by the beauty and loveliness of Christ's character, stirred by his purity, and inflamed with the holy fire of his self-sacrifice, flows into cordial agreement with all other trustful souls about it, so likewise attracted and kindled; the soul that is willing with them to celebrate and carry out its reverence and love for the common Lord in every evangelical and Christian way, according to its fair understanding of his design, is a member of Christ's real church.

In this broad allowance of liberty, there is no license, but a holy severity greater than in any dogmatic interpretation or ecclesiastic imposition. It gives inevitable point to the inquiry, "Do we so flow and so proceed together?" Are we a church, or but a congregation? Is this building rightly denominated a church, or only a meeting-house? Pardon the fear that such questioning touches our special weakness and danger. There is among us a tendency to err in regarding our religion simply as a scheme of doctrine and a system of morality, according to which every one is to go and do certain independent works, and offer them to the smile of God's approval; hoping that, in his wise and good decision, he will call them virtue, the one only thing needful, and stamp on them the title of admission to heaven. Ah, my friends! we can go to heaven in no such solitary, unsympathizing way, apart from our kind. Heaven is not a country whose

direction the single traveller can find, or a shore the lonely navigator can reach. The strongest are too feeble, and the wisest lack sagacity, for an unaided achievement like that. The very road to heaven lies through one another's hearts. There is no path beside. The very outset and course we must take is that mutual communion which is hardly less essential either to virtue or joy than our communion with God. So the going to heaven is well represented in the inspirations of sacred poetry as a jubilant march, not a painful plodding, and perchance straggling out of the way.

"One army of the living God,
To his command we bow :
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

The central principle of Christianity is not strictly a moral, but a spiritual, principle of love; and there is, in the teaching and institution of Christ embodying this principle, a dignity which has in its favor the verdict of all good sense and philosophy, of all knowledge of man or God. The love of God, which is the first spark of all religion and excellence, kindles the love of man, and touches philanthropy with its own holiness. Then out of this human love, thus quickened and sanctified, issues, in its best and finest quality, all morality, all lowliness, generosity, charity, justice, and truth. The church of Christ is the hearthstone on which these

fires of divine and human affection are lighted. The services and ordinances of the gospel are the fuel with which these fires are fed. God's children and Christ's disciples, well called a flock, gather around the sacred flame for warmth and illumination, and bear away their burning lamps and ardent hearts into all the coldness and darkness of the world, to fill it with saving beams of lustre and heat.

This is the order and method of Christian redemption. It is not a melancholy handling of our own wounded hearts, but bringing our hearts into the fellowship of those who go to Christ to be healed of deeper diseases than he cured in the plains and cities of Judea, and along the shores of Galilee. Our own righteousness is not, as is sometimes said, the centre and beginning of religion, but the product and end of religion. That Christian love, of which the Christian church is the symbol and vessel, is the root of righteousness, through all the variety and extent of human worth. Very poor and small is that virtue which is not founded in love. As, we are told, the towering verdure of some great tree, which we admire, is owing to springs of water near by, under its roots; so all that is grand in character must be nurtured out of those deep and sweet fountains of the affections, of which some men are weak enough to be ashamed, though they are both manhood's and womanhood's glory, as they are both the gladness and the purification of the world. The virtue that depends alone on the

will and weak purpose of human ability, is apt to grow dry and remain slender, like stalks in the fall of the year, mid the meagre supplies of an arid and sandy soil, and, beneath great pressure of the wind and flood of temptation, to be uprooted, or break helplessly and fatally down, and be borne perishing miserably away.

Let us, then, lean not on our own arm, but together on the arm of God, stretched out in his Son. Let us meet, not as a congregation of private inquirers and individual worshippers alone, but as a church of united spirits and co-working hands. Let us come not looking to one of our number called a minister, preacher, or pastor, expecting him, with the breath of his mouth, to build up the entire body; and, with more than an angel's miraculous endowment, to touch continually the thousand places needing counsel and comfort, from infancy to old age. But let us strive always to foster in each other every principle of religion, and to bring into both the beauty of flower and the richness of fruit, every seed of goodness. Let us not spend our time in complaining of what we may think icy and depressing in the social and religious circumstances around us. It our business, with warm and gentle breathing, to melt the frost, and improve the common lot where we are placed. How much can be done by those, though not many, who are animated with this holy zeal! By a few noble and disinterested toilers has many a ship on the high seas, with all

her crew and company, been kept from sinking. It is an object indeed of zeal to move on prosperously over the tide of time, that Christian religion, which, at the same time, like a noble vessel, bears us to the eternal haven ; and, beyond every thing else ever sent into this world, takes men out of all their diversities of condition and fortune and education, of natural genius and disposition, into one accordant blessed fellowship, to have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. The full benediction of this one and universal bond attends on that real and visible entering into Christ's church, which, for every sincere soul, is a step of advance in whatever is right and pure and heavenly.

The church of Christ ! It has been with some a word of scoffing and reproach. It has had its ages of partial corruption and apparent decline. It has contracted occasional unavoidable stains in travelling through this violent and bloody world. Hypocrisy has sometimes nestled at its altar, and honesty refused to go in at its door. But, under an open-eyed, unwinking survey of all its character and history, it still stands forth the noblest society ever formed on earth. No human association dares provoke comparison with it, for the generosity of its spirit, or the magnitude and multitude of its benefits. Over this warring and licentious globe, it has trod, as a holy phalanx, for eighteen centuries ; and, in the worst times, shed some healing and refining influence on the human mind. LOW

as the world may have sunk, it has never been utterly dragged down with, but always been above, the world, and raised the world above itself. By no other band or fellowship, by no tribe or people, or princely line, in whatever is great and deserving, has it been equalled. It has transferred from itself to the very enclosures in which it has assembled, an honor without parallel in any other structures in the world. Nay, nothing in nature herself, in all her vastness and beauty, is so exalting to the mind as the little space that is filled with Christian communion. Much has been said of the sanctuary of nature, and it has been written that the groves were God's first temples. But, when the air is soft, and the light is pleasant, — when the boundless arch is above, and the matchless horizon around us, we go into the church ; and in its little room, occupied to the soul with the noblest associations of history, or with its atmosphere trembling at the tones of song and prayer, we find more than in the infinite space. It is the doctrine of art, that, by a divine inspiration, there may be a choicer beauty on a narrow strip of canvas than in broad regions of earth and sky. So, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, does the church exceed the natural splendor of the world. It is founded on a rock. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it ; and opening soon, as it does, into celestial mansions, we shall find both safety and direction through the world by meantime abiding within its walls.

But this permanence of the church, predicted in Christ's words, is not confined to the present state: its prevailing against the powers of destruction is an immortal prevalence. Many, even among those who would appear to think most highly of the church, seem to consider it simply as a temporary means for training up successive mortal generations in the rudiments of faith and worship. When it is regarded as consisting purely in externals, it must have an aspect as perishable as it is material; and no awful sacredness ascribed to its forms or vessels can save it. But, when its nerve and strength are seen in the spiritual ties running underneath this outward frame of visible stature and motion, then it starts up from the dust into which all earthly magnificence crumbles; it towers out of the valley of death, and stands fresh and new, as the spirits it embraces, on the eternal shore.

This view of the church is essential to a just notion of our immortality. Two ideas, of future advance as of present improvement, struggle together in the same, or are opposed to each other by different minds. The first idea is of individual growth and development for ever; the second is of an unfolding in fellowship of social sympathy and power. The first idea certainly has its grandeur. The single mind, studying by itself the works and ways of the Creator, meditating on all their beauty and wisdom, till lyric strains of holy rapture and blessed thanks burst from its

conscious depths; then, soaring ever to new heights for the thrilling pleasures of private discovery, and flying into the far profound of the universe, furnished with wings to beat secure its lonely way along the coasts of all the attractions of space, and return laden with its own riches to its ever larger hive, and even, in its immense expansion of strength and knowledge, to become almost a companion for God himself, or to converse only, like a prince of intellect and science on earth, with some rare equal in genius and attainment,— this idea of the heavenly futurity is lofty, and doubtless, to some, may have a peculiar charm. But truer to the divine word and to the human heart is the other idea which represents heaven, not as a hermitage, but as a house; and its inhabitants, not as independent occupants, but as a company united in all affectionate intercourse, dwelling in the brotherly and sisterly amity which cherubim and seraphim symbolize; or going forth happy, harmonious bands in their wayfaring; or circling in choral troops of praise and gladness, twining their voices, movements, and faculties in a unison which is no constraint, but perfect freedom; in short, raised to its fulness and accomplished in its refinement, a church. As the wild savage or the recluse sage can never here below reach that completeness of human nature which is found in civilized life, so no retirement in heaven could present such opportunity of progress and happiness as will be offered in its upper man-

sions. The thought which, more perhaps than any other, has haunted philosophy in all ages, is that of a perfect society. No conception is so transporting as that of the capacity for enjoyment from all that is great and wise and good in a social state. The accomplishment is not here, but there where every good beginning shall be fulfilled. It is what now exists only in germ and prophecy. It is Christ's church.

But it is the church of Christ, as it is on earth, with which we have now to do. Let us count it our religious security, and glory to be in it and of it. Let us not regard it with the absurd misconception of those to whom it is but an aggregate of individuals, an assembly in joining which each one adds but another unit. For it has a power of its own, circulating through all its living organization, by which all its parts are transformed and uplifted into new sanctity and strength for action; through whose divine channels both the benevolence and devotion of the private heart are redoubled and ever sustained. As the soldier in an army derives half his spirit and courage from his comrades, and loses heart and hope when the ranks are in any way cut off or divided; as the citizen of a community has a vigor and happiness and inspiration to effort, unknown to the alien or the exile, though of equal native force; as the laborer works with new zeal and less exhaustion for hearing the sound of a spade or hammer, or the song of others conspiring

at his side ; so the member of Christ's church draws from his companionship an ability finer and more constant, as it is more pure and spiritual, than can flow through martial music, or be wafted by the banners of an host ; than can be expressed in enterprises of state and achievements of patriotism, or accumulated and kept in motion for all the toil and business of this world. The individual is not absorbed in the church, and does not remain as he was, but is ennobled, warmed with a sacred fire of common enthusiasm, and impelled by new and more urgent motives to the service of God and the salvation of man. The body he belongs to, beyond earthly banding, is a sacramental host, a celestial estate, and a company of laborers together with God. What other relationship could be equal in the honor it confers, the confidence it nourishes, or the duration through which it shall last !

DISCOURSE IV.

THE CHURCH AND THE SYNAGOGUE.

Matt. xii. 9. — HE WENT INTO THEIR SYNAGOGUE.

Eph. iii. 21. — TO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH.

THERE may appear something strange and conflicting in the relations of Christ to the synagogue and church. He frequented the synagogue, taught in the synagogue, listened to the doctrine and joined in the praise of the synagogue, and availed himself of the public religious opportunities of the synagogue to lay the foundation of his church. Yet it somewhat shocks our associations thus to bring together these two, the synagogue and the church; the synagogue that persecuted Jesus to the death, and the church that was to enshrine his name in everlasting honor; the synagogue that arraigned, imprisoned, and slew his disciples, and the church, the glorious monument of their labor and self-sacrifice; the synagogue, repository of narrow prejudice and source of bigoted zeal, and the church, channel of the noblest sentiments and largest principles ever published on earth.

With all these contrasts, however, there is one point in which the church and synagogue meet, as being both social instruments for the establishment of religion; and both illustrating the dependence of religion upon social feeling for its local maintenance and universal diffusion. The meaning of the word *synagogue*, and of the word translated *church*, is essentially the same, — the gathering or calling together of persons agreeing with each other. First the synagogue, then the church, was the power God used to unite men, and raise them to himself. We are acquainted with but two great revelations, the Jewish and the Christian. It is remarkable that, in the one and the other alike, the doctrine and law made known from on high were entrusted, for their preservation and efficiency, not to an abstraction or oral tradition, not alone to learning, eloquence, book, or discourse, but to an organization and society.

Witnessing, in this city, the recent dedication of a Jewish synagogue, impressed on my mind this common lesson of the synagogue and the church. When I saw the sacred scrolls of the Pentateuch of Moses — which, often transcribed, had travelled down from time immemorial — brought so solemnly into their sanctuary by a band of Israelites, with that attendant voice of human unison in divine thanksgiving, which most of all things touches the heart; and beheld the several fac-simile copies made to guard against possible error, borne slowly about

seven times, circling with the seven-fold chanting of the ancient psalms of Judea, in the peculiarly sweet tones of the harmonious choir; and then the reverential deposit of the decorated rolls, before the face of the congregation, in the ark of the covenant, with the accompanying prayers to which the Amen of the people, like a musical wind, swept through the little room, and wafted up the many silent beating hearts towards heaven;—I felt that the despised and dispersed children of Abraham, by their concord, though a mere handful, under such cruel disadvantages and burdens, might yet teach a lesson to not a few of those recorded in our ecclesiastical registers, and calling themselves followers of the Son of God.

The silver bells, that tinkled over the adorned parchment, seemed to echo the meaning of those golden ones in the times of the Hebrew glory wrought on the priestly robes. The scarfs, that hung on the shoulders carrying the holy vessels, appeared as it were the faded remnants of the garments, splendid with costly stones, once worn by the sons of Aaron. The little vase, lighted beside the consecrated place with a perpetual flame, never day or night thenceforward to be suffered to go out, looked like the residue of precious lamps and shining censors. The so slight, diminished band of devotees, beyond documents and manuscripts that scholars pore over, walked in living testimony of the ancient union. The faith of Abraham, piety

of Isaac, and sagacity of Jacob, stood on visible features of flesh and blood. All the forms handed down through ages, for links to bind one soul with another in the service of a common Maker, bespoke the value of man's sympathy with his brother-man, to preserve and defend for ever against waste and extinction the disclosed truths of religion.

Thus may I not say the Jew has a lesson for the Christian, and the synagogue for the church? Consider the immense importance, to all the world indeed, of that synagogue. What had kept the saving ideas of a divine original inspiration, flowing a sacred river far back out of undiscovered sources in a hoar antiquity, from sinking into forgetfulness amid the sandy wastes of time? It was not merely the record of them on paper and stone. That Egyptian paper would crumble; and the tables, soon broken beneath the Mount, be at last reduced to powder. But, as a literary or religious association survives out of the burnt and blackened ruins of the building in which it has met, so, beyond engraving or inscription, a social power redeemed the heavenly instructions and commands from the whelming oblivion. It was meeting together, first in the open air, next in the houses of the prophets, then, for a better accommodation, in the synagogue, planted commonly in some picturesque situation, that appropriated to the bosom of the race the words of its Lawgiver. The life, the spiritual substance of the people, was received

and embodied, brought to a head of immediate influence, and conducted in a perennial stream, by the synagogue.

Whence and wherefore, to make our melody with, have we now those sublime psalms, sung, not here and there alone by scattered Israelites, crouching, almost unseen, in Rome and London, in Amsterdam and New York; but by vast bodies of Christian believers, from the shores washed by the Indian Ocean to the waters of the Pacific Seas? As the great poems and tragedies, now the delight of the world, were composed to be publicly recited or enacted; so they were written, not simply for a solitary harp or a midnight orison, but for the synagogue and the temple. How did that grand doctrine, which is the crown of our rejoicing, of the unity of God, first declared to his chosen people, stand against the tide of polytheism and idolatry, for long thousands of years, till, like the ark across the deluge, it reached safely the time when it should be re-affirmed for ever, through all generations, by Jesus Christ? It was clasped to the breast of the nation by this mighty sympathetic power of the synagogue, and the Sanhedrim or great synagogue, with all the ceremonies and festivals that drew the various tribes of Canaan together. What but this same social energy of affection, giving life to religion after the lapse of fifty centuries, crossed the Atlantic, and, at the diameter of the earth, distant from its first seat, has summoned together among

us the scanty members of a nation still vital and indissoluble ; while the roving, disconnected savages, that once possessed this whole continent, are almost without an epitaph, fading away ? Truly, the synagogue in a grove of Judea, or by a stream of Galilee, was the parent of synagogues in a world far off, and then unknown !

There is something fine and admirable even in the humble circumstances of such a spectacle. The courageous and cheerful rearing, upon a close street in a low quarter of the city, of that small synagogue, to be overshadowed by the steeples and towers of a hundred Christian edifices, with their belfries' clang about its mute, narrow dome, that a few might worship the God of their fathers in the way of their fathers, prompts the question whether we, with the sum and sceptre of social power in our hands, employ it to deepen and extend our religion with an earnestness like theirs, and results proportioned to our means. Avoiding the vices of the synagogue, the pride and hatred and spiritual conceit that grew up within its old limits in Palestine, have we, in the Christian church, its virtues of religious faith and cordial sympathy ? Do we, by all means, enliven such faith and sympathy by respect for the holy rites, and by sincere performance of the appointed ordinances, which Christ made part of his gospel,—by regard for the book of the Lord, and observance of those hallowed times and places, the special conductors of his spirit, itself

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unbounded, into the infirmity of our nature, and the sinful worldliness of our hearts? Such is the question which the grave order of that Hebrew dedication presents, and the loud strain of its anthems pours into our ears. Have we, too, proved what affection and honor for one another, in the faith and veneration of God, can do to sink his word into our convictions, and exemplify it in our lives? Or, idle in our full prosperity and easy predominance over all Pagan and Jewish modes, do we sit, careless of each other, with our children drawn hither and thither by curiosity or rumor, as though it were some trump of fame we were listening for, and not the everlasting gospel of God? Let the manner of our own coming in and going out, and the measure of our concern for the general good, answer.

Will it be said these days of freedom, and of doing as we and our children please, are better than the former days; and it is unworthy to go back, for a theme of exhortation, to half-obsolete customs, that flourished in by-gone times; as though a Christian, in his church, could learn aught from a synagogue and a Jew! But let us not forget the rock from which we were hewn, the root from which we have grown, and the olive-tree into which, by favor, we were grafted. Let not the Anglo-Saxon, for shame, forget his obligations to the Hebrew. Let him not forget of whom, according to the flesh, of the house of David, of the seed of Judah, his

Saviour was born. Let him not forget his own so long-descended heritage, from the appearance in the flame of Horeb, and from the commandments that rolled in the thunders, and were cut by the lightnings of Sinai.

We may be proud of our modern inventions and discoveries. We may boast our art and science. We may tell what we can do with our press and compass, with our looms and engines, with our iron rail and electric wire. Nevertheless, those old Hebrews, now vagabond and scorned, are our spiritual progenitors. In the name of God, they claim our filial debt of religious gratitude. Though now, like thin hordes of Arabs in the desert, they wander in fancy through the magnificent space of their ancient history; we, and all the dwellers in Christendom, walk with them over a common ground of annals, unequalled odes, and exalted prophecies. We are inextricably united with them, for time and eternity, though so broadly separated, too, by the new instructions of a greater Teacher than they ever acknowledged. Truly the by-word and hissing for the Jew has been carried farther than has been good for the Christian. They can teach us, that the social power, by which, through the synagogue, they have so widely inoculated mankind with their sublime persuasions of the oneness and justice of God, must be more firmly relied on, and more vigorously wielded, to instil the additional lessons of our Divine Master.

So whispers the synagogue to the church. Such was the information conveyed to my ear from the lips of yonder preacher and choristers, as the Hebrew and English tongues alternated in the voice of their prayer and praise. Such is the message of Providence I report to you. Nor let us, in any arrogance of birth or belief, disdain to learn from a Jew. "Hath not a Jew eyes, senses, affections, passions?"—yes, and experience too; by which, while discarding his errors, we may wisely profit in our endeavors to let our light shine, and to propagate our faith. By his example we may be led not to trust our individual judgments, and rest on our independent wills alone, indolently shouting, "Truth is mighty, and will prevail;" but to avail ourselves of the same social united force to illuminate and warm the world with the beams of mercy from Calvary and the Mount of Olives, as well as with the fire that came down the awful summits of Arabia.

Compared with the synagogue, the church is, in its methods, spare and spiritual. As though its Author would provide against all superstition and formality, it originally received from him the least of outward ritual that would suffice to clothe it. In our own view and practice, it has no excess, beyond that Author's mind, of symbol and form. All the more must we take care that the ties it offers to pass through our hearts be not neglected. If ours be a dead or loose and languish-

ing church, as public worshippers we must decline. Count ourselves, as we fondly may, in the most enlightened fellowship of believers, yet must we mournfully die, not for refusing to be a sect, but for refusing to be of Christ's church; and over our grave a less elevated, less rational understanding of religion will rise, with unscriptural pomp, to usurp the post given for our loyalty to maintain, but by our infidelity betrayed. If our liberality run into license, the salt losing its savor, worldliness and unbelief will creep into our temples and into the schools of piety and knowledge which our fathers bequeathed; and their inscription, "To Christ and the Church," from the marble where they printed it, have to be erased.

If we, in this spot, are indifferent, our heart not enlisted, nor our hand engaged for the common good, our mind not directed to perceive in mutual cordiality a soil for the growth of personal character and of the joy of public devotion, then let even the old synagogue plead with us, and, by what amid faults was faithful in its work, warn us against being recreant in ours. We may hold the Jew hostile to us, yet, according to a wise proverb, "It is lawful to be instructed by an enemy." Let the policy of his institutions, firm through all the outlawries and wrongs he has suffered, convince us of the value and need of religious union. Let it be a demonstration, that we can set on foot, and, by our constant and punctual interest, encourage no co-

operation for generous, social ends, be it a Sunday-school or a Bible-class, a vestry-meeting or a library for the young or the old, which will not reward every effort of conscientious kindness with contributions to the individual and general improvement; till we know that our humanity is blessed only by a baptism in divinity.

The Jews have been bound so inveterately together, in part, no doubt, by the very agonies of exile and captivity and scorn they have endured; and it has been said, that some form of calamity or opposition is necessary to bind and defend Christians against the worse combined perils of spiritual lukewarmness and worldly success. But is there not, in the course of nature and providence, adversity and trial enough to rivet in faith and love our souls? Common danger does press men in close ranks together. But in our actual condition in this world, with disappointment dogging our steps, with pain and sickness and grief on our track, with death slow and keen holding us ever in pursuit, and many foes in full cry after us soon to seize their several shares of all that is mortal for their prey, what more want we to consolidate us? Even as the irrational tribes of the lower creation, in common fear and anguish, flock together; so, under the throng of ills that flesh is heir to, shall we not find solace in communion? Need we, like the old Hebrews, be driven out from our pleasant seats by war, or scourged in them by famine, or led away into some

far Chaldea, to hang the harps of our gladness upon the willows by the rivers of Babylon, before our religion can be dear to us?

Whether, however, by adversity driven, or, in disgust with earthly prosperity, drawn to seek the consolations of the Christian faith, those consolations will abound only as we nourish the sympathies through which, by God's decree, they flow; and those sympathies will thrive but in proportion to our intercourse through the forms and means which are the language of religion, — a language speaking when the tongue is silent, and often more potent than the tongue in its speech.

This is celebrated as the reading age. Yet we should remember, it is not only arbitrary characters that carry meaning to our souls. The heavens and the earth are but a grand system of natural signs to convey the truth and mind of God. And God has, moreover, consulted the nature of the human heart, by ordaining another style of language, in the emblems through which our spirits may converse. Christ, the spirit, of all spirits that ever wore flesh, transcendent in insight and pure intuition of excellence, yet appointed certain forms, and showed his supreme wisdom in saying, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them;" and, "Do this in remembrance of me." The Jew, in his synagogue, used an earlier, more juvenile vocabulary, copious and vivid with altar and sacrifice, procession and feast, outer court and holy of holies; requiring a ritual more striking

and complex according to his imperfect culture. In terms more simple and beautiful, significant of loftier affections and higher hopes, the Son of God desired that Christians should communicate in his church. Let not the terms be neglected, lest the ideas and sentiments they set forth fall into disuse.

DISCOURSE V.

THE LORD'S TABLE.

1 Cor. x. 21. — THE LORD'S TABLE.

THIS is one of a number of familiar expressions, — such as the Lord's day and the Lord's house, — by which we connect Christ with particular times, places, and services. On the first Sunday of each month, you notice almost the only change ever seen in these courts. A board has been spread, with the plate and cup on the cloth that covers it, presenting the form and likeness of what may nourish and strengthen. The eye may rest carelessly on it as you come in; but nothing else in all the world contains, in such compass, what is so significant and affecting. Nothing else, purely material, so sets forth a divine power and virtue. By stretching out his hand to break some bread and pour some wine, the Son of God transformed an old Jewish exclusive feast of the passover into a new festival, destined to go beyond the bounds of the Hebrew locality and name; and, beginning before our governments and customs were born, to last and grow through all succeeding ages, for

the most glad and solemn institute of every Gentile nation.

This, its enduring power, however, depended on nothing gorgeous or imposing in its origin. It was a plain meal,—the last supper of a friend with the friends he was about to leave. Artists and men of imagination have since described it magnificently. The Lord's table has been by them amply raised and extended, or curiously carved and adorned. The room it stood in has been expanded, with polished pillars, into the similitude of a palace; and windows have been opened from it through a bland summer air far into beautiful prospects. By yellow gold and pale shining silver, mixed with sparkling gems, in soft engravings and costly paintings, with rich substances of solid grain, wood or ivory, the Lord's table has been represented. After such patterns, indeed, it has actually been made, under royal roofs furnished, and in splendid chapels preciously decorated and served. But the place where it was first laid was only a poor upper chamber; a spare room yielded for that purpose, because required for no other, for a sad band, soon to be scattered. Common household utensils held the bread and wine, with the loaf and bitter herbs of which they partook; while all about them, as they reclined, was as homely as in any assembly of Israelites in the lowliest dwelling of poverty. Yet this only magnifies the heavenly power, with which that wonderful being, who was head and master of the

feast, has, through the ordinance which the touch of his finger established, reached forth to all the corners of the earth, to make his supper the holiest of traditions, the widest of observances, and most enduring of institutions.

But why did that greatest and best in human form set up such a table? Wherefore did he, on whose lips inspiration sat to make his doctrines and precepts clearer and more potent than all other instructions and commands, resort to this ritual prescription? Because there was something in his mind which language could not tell, nor tongue, though on fire with the Holy Ghost, adequately express,—but only mute and touching symbols convey. As, after all that our words can utter, there is something else which only natural language can communicate; or as we appoint social and civil solemnities, beyond discourse or gesture, to impress special events; so in Christ's heart was a sentiment too deep to come out in conversation, or be preserved in a record. Therefore, with a holy ejaculation and sally of nature, indicating his supply to the human soul, as he shared the bread and wine, he said, "This is my body," and "This is my blood."

The Lord's table, then, was Christ's mode of communication. In periods when speech is rude and imperfect, a picture-language has been invented, in which certain drawings and colors stand for particular objects, and produce impressions on

the mind more vivid than arbitrary characters. In many things, such as the sword borne before the magistrate to signify armed law, the scales of justice, or the figure of the good Samaritan, for charity, we use this picture-language still. So the Lord's table, above all the syllables of the dictionary, portrays his feeling. Beyond all the sounds of human lips, it is a hieroglyphic sign, intelligible to all understandings, high or humble, and, without learned interpretation, pathetic to every tribe. The language of one country must be translated for the inhabitants of another. But to Greek and Roman, to Saxon and Arabian, to the smooth citizen of the town and to the unshorn savage, the Lord's table, the broken bread, which is his broken body, with the flowing wine, which is his streaming blood, means, and will for ever mean, the same.

It is a universal token of love let down from heaven, and a banner of peace moving over all the earth. It has been the purest common bond of kindreds and nations, to link them together below, and lift them up on high. As, from the most ancient times, the table itself, in any human dwelling, has been the signal and centre of human friendship and hospitality, so that those who had eaten and drunk together could not be foes, but, almost as by a divine appeal, the savor of their meat was the cement and pledge of their amity; so those who have sat in sympathy at the Lord's table have taken and imbibed from him a temper better and

stronger to unite than all the customs of clans, and all the policies of nations.

This table has done for mankind what could never be done by elements purely moral and abstractly rational. In truth, we are not, nor are the wisest philosophers, creatures of conscience and calculation alone ; but of feeling too, and of association, on which feeling so much depends. Nor is it the weakness, but the glory, of our nature, and one of its finest and largest susceptibilities of good, that we are so. If a parent's portrait can make cold canvas the inspirer and teacher of our souls, in a lore better than books could impart, and we should not think him the wiser who before it might be unmoved ; so this portraiture of suffering love and self-sacrifice in the Lord's table can revive our languishing religious affections. When all else may have failed ; when argument has fallen short, and resolution grown weak, and prayer itself, alas ! may have become dull and faint, the Lord's table may afford us a stimulus from the soul of Jesus, through the electric chain of his followers.

Many are accustomed to think of Christianity simply as a written covenant. The name calls up to their imagination only a series of books, chapters, and verses in the New Testament. Thank God that we have this printed, infallible, and incorruptible memorial of our Lord's life and teachings. Thank God, that, when a mass of unauthorized ceremonies and inconsistent pomp was piled on

the simplicity of the gospel, there were those found to raise the cry, — "The Bible, the Bible only, the religion of Protestants!" Nevertheless, in this age of words, it is well to remember that the Christianity enjoined by the Bible is in part unwritten; cannot be put into any stroke of the pen, any utterance of the mouth, or pressure of the types. Its inspiration, that sat on its apostles like cloven tongues of fire, flowed, not only into words, but into ordinances, and made them instruments to write it on the tables of the heart, to grave it in the features of the face, to make it move in more gracious manners, and sound in kindlier tones.

Thus it gave an instruction which our nature cannot receive from being set at school to any logical propositions. In truth, it is the vice and danger of our times, that even the cultivated mind of the community is too much in contact with words, and too little in contact with things. Many are now educated upon phrases, and scarcely come, with all their wisdom, to know a thing. There is, no doubt, a peril from forms as well as from words; but forms may sometimes bring us nearer than words to reality, as a symbol expresses more than an arbitrary character.

We speak, as of a supreme authority and obligation, of the record of our religion. But its outward forms, the buildings it has reared, with solemn gates and halls of praise and prayer, the celebrations it has preserved from Christ himself and his commis-

sioned followers, as well as that best of books it has given to the world, are its record. And of all the portions of this larger record, while none is more ancient than the Lord's table, none perhaps has poured such renewing energy into the devout and humane dispositions of God's children. It is the loftiest and most venerable in that chain of monuments and historic proofs, that, like a range of mountains, skirts the face of the earth, runs all the way from Christ's visible presence, and is illumined by the days of worship and communion. It is, as we call it, a means of grace, a medium bringing from Christ to the sincere communicant, and carrying back, sympathies, to bear which to and fro the voice of a man alone is unequal or unfit. Its disuse, — against which doubtless many, not observing it, would exclaim, — with the omission of all the connected rites, confining religion to the volume that tells its story, would immediately and vastly reduce the power of religion over the human heart, whether to restrain from evil, or to excite to good.

I know we talk of the principles of Christianity as the basis of our trust for the improvement and salvation of ourselves and the race. But it is not the principles of Christianity, as generalizations in this poor brain of ours, that can save us; but rather those principles as incarnations in Jesus Christ, and as vital currents from his person and spirit, to maintain our intercourse with himself. The conviction of such intercourse is no groundless or super-

stitious faith. Jesus was never really separated from his friends. The brown clod dissolving beneath, the changeful, dissipating air above, could not remove him. It was not in the power of death, by any means, to lay the Son of God in the dust. Mary was mistaken as she cried, through her tears, at the sepulchre, that they had taken away her Lord. Where he is in space, as our short, blind senses measure it, we cannot indeed tell. In this multiplied complexity of revolving motions, we can scarce tell where in space we are ourselves. But as God is with us; and as heaven, his habitation, must therefore be near, even at the door,—Jesus Christ cannot be wanting to his own declaration, that he will ever be with his disciples' seeking souls. To every throb of our affection, he answers. Though neither beam of light nor breath of air inform of him; though there be no whisper in our ears of his presence, nor audible repeating of his old benediction of peace in the circle of his followers; yet the vision and the hearing shall be, where God's kingdom and all reality is, within. The blessing shall be felt, and, with him who is the spring of our belief and expectation, in a joy beyond that from any human face or enchanting voice, unspeakable intimacy established.

Thank God, that, in this so mysterious, unfathomable sea of existence, we have such clear, and, to the heart, palpable support. "If this fail, the pillared firmament is rottenness." Thank God,

that a board can be spread, and called truly, in the full and perfect sense, the Lord's table. Thank God, that, from vain wrestlings with our mortal destiny, which are known alike to the ignorant and the wise; from metaphysic depths of doubtful speculation; from those sore smittings of pain and grief, harder than the pelting snow or hail; from all that darkens round our path, or disappoints our aim, we can flee to a refuge raised firm on supernatural foundations,—the Lord's table. Sometimes, when the vapory gloom comes hovering over me, imaging the damp and narrow pit on whose edge I tread; sometimes, when the cold wind blows upon me, shaking down or whirling abroad some last leaf or remnant of decay; sometimes, when I gaze at the midnight stars, and, in all their grand and bright procession, they describe not my onward course; sometimes in the musing hours that show me my ignorance, and sometimes in the active ones that limit my sublunary end, I am impelled to own these tangible remembrances of the gracious past, and clear assurances of the glorious future, more gratefully than my accents can express.

The Lord's table! Itself made of earthly matter, it is caught up for a vehicle of the love that shall last when it crumbles. In the eyes of all, can it not have dignity and beauty, when, lo! beyond any imagination of genius, from its little mechanical limit here, it dilates over the earth; beyond this little hour stands through unreckoned centuries of

time, and, in its ascending length, reaches, well provided with innumerable seats, up to heaven; while the guests that come to it are not only health and human joy, but pale sickness, that has resigned its last earthly hope; sorrow from the grave where it has laid its last earthly treasure; and saintly heroism, persecuted and hard-pushed to nerve itself for some terrible endurance or struggle. The ascended Christ, with his risen followers, meantime pours in light and strength from an invisible presence. As certain companions of a brave man, fallen in battle, refused to consider him dead, but still called his name in the roll; so those now partaking from the Lord's table, know that their comrades, in past time communing with God and Christ, though fallen on earth, are yet alive, and that the name which is above every name among men liveth evermore.

This upper and future reference of the Lord's table, like every thing else in our religion, connects itself with our forth-reaching and undying nature. Even the daily board at which we gather, God has contrived to meet nobler ends than nutriment or outward delight. The social meal is the medium of how much human friendship, the nourisher of how much kindred love, the occasion of how much reconciliation, the channel of how much needful counsel from the old to the young! "We are debtors to the flesh, not to live after the flesh." The table of God's goodness has, indeed, been often abused by the ex-

cesses of his children ; but it is a striking fact that the more malignant passions are not wont to come to it. During their dreadful sway, they starve those they possess, drive them away from the bright and pleasant assembly into secret dens and midnight blackness, as foes to all that is of an innocently festive and affectionately flowing nature ; while, at the table where our Father unites us, he kindles all good wishes and gracious aspirations, at the same time that he lights the wholesome fires of natural health and strength. Now, the Lord's table, that supping with us and we with him, which goes on in our hearts in anticipation of the coming joy of that feast which he promises in the kingdom of God, only carries up the first natural mercy we experience into loftier and enduring blessedness. Into what finer shape these gross organs and senses shall at length be transformed ; what more airy and delicate food can be ministered to our incorruptible being ; what hands we shall stretch forth either for the tokens of God's goodness or the harps of his praise ; in what new ways we shall taste his kindness ; on what breeze the fragrance of his love may be wafted ; in short, by what ties our undoubtedly immortal relation with all the beauty and richness of nature will be maintained, we know not. Only He knows who connects us here, and will connect us there, with his glorious works. We may but feel, that, of all this, the Lord's table is the emblem here, and will be the fulfilment hereafter.

DISCOURSE VI.

EATING THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 Cor. xi. 20. — THIS IS NOT TO EAT THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THESE words are in the tone of surprise and displeasure. The apostle speaks of something which had the look of eating the Lord's Supper, and passed for that among the Corinthian Christians, but was not so in reality. His decision, in the special case that demanded his attention, suggests the general inquiry what eating the Lord's Supper is not, and what it is, in respect to the views and customs of our own day.

There is a motive to this inquiry in the prevalence of many vague, incorrect, and injurious ideas of the Lord's Supper, leading to its abuse on the one hand, and to its neglect on the other. It is not the worldly or the wicked alone who misunderstand or think little of it. Not a few well-meaning religious persons seem to have judged it an unreal, profitless thing, worn out, and fit only to be laid aside. It appears to them as a pale ghost of the past, preposterously walking the earth beyond its time, coming with unseemly intrusion into the midst

of the stirring, substantial affairs of our age, and asking an attention to which it has no claim. It must be confessed, some punctual observers, in the sort of respect they pay, give it this color of a bodiless abstraction, to which they win little regard by their own shivering, superstitious reverence. Must it not be added, that other unworthy devotees at the supper repel better men than themselves from the service in which they can have a hand? But however misrepresented and hindered by faint friends, thoughtless scorers, or uncompromising foes, both its history and present influence, among the wise and good, prove its strong and tenaciously vital quality. Being, moreover, actually part of our worship, set forth here in the eyes of the congregation, it must be justified if retained, and appreciated to be either well administered or profitably received. In regard, however, to the rite itself, there need be no anxiety. What in it is immortally new and fresh, unites with what is for ever venerable, for its easy and triumphant vindication.

Throughout Christendom and the whole domain of civilization, all men raised above the lowest ignorance know, as a main fact of their information, that the followers of Jesus do celebrate an ordinance designated by this title of the Lord's Supper. It is an ordinance more than eighteen centuries old. Beside it, no other ordinance in the world's annals has had a hold at once so long and firm on the intelligence of the human mind. Begin-

ning in an empty 'upper chamber, it has reached into every high and humble place over most of the territory of the globe. The Lord's table has been spread upon every continent and almost every isle; and the Lord's Supper, with a periodical solemnity, in sorrowful hours, near the moment of death, or on the eve of fearful exposure, partaken by millions in every tongue invoking divine help, or commending themselves to divine mercy. The board before us is but an infinitely small part of its vast extent and endless continuation. Those who do, and those who do not, sit at this board, may alike wish to understand what it is to eat the Lord's Supper.

First, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper to make it a feast for the satisfaction of outward appetite. Into so low an estate, as we learn from Paul's rebuke, had it degenerated among the Corinthians. They may, indeed, have but imitated an earlier bad example, set in the depravity of human nature. It was a custom at Athens, in the age of Socrates, for each person coming to a feast to bring his own provision; not that, as in some later social festivals, he might add it to the common stock, but to feed on it by himself alone. This habit, perhaps coming somehow on the wind to the little band of the apostle's converts, or growing up out of the selfishness of their own hearts, in the fading away of Christ's purpose from their minds, led the rich among them to bring to the consecrated place their delicate luxuries, and the poor their plainer diet or

their empty-handed want; while each partook of what he had separately, one before another, till at last one was hungry, and another drunken.

No wonder the apostle said this was not to eat the Lord's Supper. No wonder he declared such eating and drinking unworthy and damnable. Yet how shocking that perversion, by which his phrase has, in modern times, been seized to denounce a curse on supposed incorrectness or free difference of religious opinion; and thus turned into a horrible engine of ecclesiastic tyranny, as offensive to that God whose government some would fain be thought to have in their keeping, as it is unjust and harmful to men! It is upon something far different, even upon making a sensual feast of the Lord's Supper, that Paul lays his ban. Boldly he treads into the thicket of this Corinthian sin, and tramples every false notion under foot. They fancied, forsooth, they were eating the Lord's Supper, because they came together in one place. Without hesitation he explodes the superstition, which, alas! has reached our own day, that any local sacredness of temple or altar made an act holy. He briefly tells the church, that assembling in one spot, however dedicated and sequestered, did not cause their exclusive and proud entertainment to be the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper was a showing forth of the Lord's death. It consisted in a cordial, joint remembrance of what he had done and borne; and a revival, in their hearts, of the spirit in which

he had done and borne it. Truly, there could be no heavier rebuke than that of his passion upon their insobriety.

The apostle's admonition is still instructive. Some, in our own age, have complained of the grave and serious manner of observing the Lord's Supper. They would have it more of a social and friendly feast; not indeed after the Athenian or Corinthian style, but in the warmth of a sympathetic and conversational meeting. Surely, there should be no coldness round the Lord's table. Yet this table cannot furnish what is like any other feast, the dinner given to a hero, or even the family thanksgiving of kindred and friends, eating and drinking, in gay, though innocent, hilarity together. In the Lord's Supper is the presence of a spirit peculiar, awful in purity, as it is tender in love. There is a hand felt pressing on the heart, to chasten the gush of common greeting and festivity. There is a stillness spreading over the company, which is the consenting tribute of all to the venerated one, unseen in the midst; a silence, not of death, but of the soul's speech.

Eating and drinking, which are the original and universal methods of supplying the first human necessities, are indeed but symbolic of the Lord's Supper. As the breaking of bread together is a world-wide sign of amicable feeling, — as a grain of salt is the token of good-will everywhere, from the Arab in his desert to the Highlander on his

hills ; so this Christian festival signifies no bodily feast, but communion with Christ.

But the apostle's description shows again, that it is not eating the Lord's Supper to make it a mere form. Externally, no doubt, it is a form. But there are two kinds of forms, the dead and the living. The dead are those that have lost, or never had, life. The living are those that unfold and preserve some principle and power, whether in the organic life of nature or of man. Such a form is the tree, that buds and blooms, to show in flower and fruit the hidden meaning which God set in its seed. Such a form is the bird, that gives wings and songs to an original idea and germ of animal life, implanted by the Creator. Such a form is the human body, that manifests, in thousandfold action, a rational and supernatural energy. These parallels only do justice to that form of the Lord's Supper, which, from his planting hand and nurturing spirit, was a simple growth into the world of his mind and love.

There is, indeed, a difference in forms. Radical, indiscriminate prejudice against all forms is contradiction to true philosophy, and treason to our best affections. The living forms are of indispensable value in every department of human existence. They make the shape and mould of all society. Nowhere should they be mere or dead forms. There should be no customary mode but what sets forth and maintains some matter of truth and justice.

The civilities of life, our habitual salutations, the beginning and ending of a letter, the politeness of our manners, the very motions and signs of our courtesy, should be full of our hearts, else they are worse than a mere appearance; which, as it is sometimes apologetically said, everybody understands. Nay, what is thus understood but the counterfeit of sincerity! It is an indication of the progress of human sinfulness; and, like a dry stain upon the wharf, marks how low has ebbed the tide of man's generosity to man. When all this degeneracy is acquiesced in, — when these mere forms, being cut off from the soul's truth, no more breathe and pulse from its healthy depths, but are like a shell coldly parting from the vital organs out of which it grew, — they lose all their beauty, become a positive evil, and stand in the way. They check all spiritual increase, confirm hypocritical pretension, are the vessels of sanctimonious affectation, and, in their religious character, a wretched investment of spiritual pride, pompous indolence, and aspiring ambition. They are a fine dress on the wearer's disease, or a magnificent mausoleum and marble temple over a corpse. Yet never, because of such deadness or lifeless keeping of the Christian forms, should we give them up, to rely on our own genius for the substitute of a way of salvation. This would be like going into the famous galleries of art, and reducing the master-pieces and models of sculpture and painting, that shine as

openings from heaven on the walls, to a confusion of color and a heap of clay, in order to reconstruct something better than all that ancient and marvellous beauty, by our own wit, at our own will.

Once more, the meaning of our text shows that eating the Lord's Supper is not to make a profession of holiness. This is a very common mistake. Many are prevented from coming to the table by their reluctance to make such a profession. They declare they are not good enough to eat the Lord's Supper. They would be religious without professing to be so, and prefer, they say, to be better than they profess, than to profess more than they are. Indeed, we often hear it spoken in eulogy of some one, that he never professed, but was a good man; while vials of scorn and reproach are poured at once upon the ordinances of religion and on the loud professor who maintains them. But all this style of argument is cancelled by considering that it is not a profession of holiness which, in eating the Lord's Supper, we make. It is but emphatically saying, what every man would blush to deny, that we desire to be Christian and holy. Yet, so far from being a profession of holiness, it is, in truth, the very opposite. It is a declaration of our not having attained what we desire, because so anxiously we use this means of attaining it. They who do not use the means might more justly be thought to make a profession of holiness. Unsolicitous to try new methods, or to avail themselves of the old institutions of

the gospel, they may be supposed content with their spiritual state. It is the man in danger of drowning that grasps the rope, despised by him who can swim at ease through the sea. Moreover, it was not saints, sound and perfect men, but sick and sinful souls, that Jesus first called to that emblematic meal his disciples have ever since partaken. He did not expel the vile, nor drive out Judas himself. We come to the Lord's Supper hungry and thirsty, seeing the holiness not in ourselves, but in him from whom we would assimilate it to ourselves. Our faith in him, our love to him, we are willing to profess. His side, in this world's conflicts, we are humbly willing to take. So much, gratitude and justice owe. Whether those who withhold the tribute do all in their power, either to own their debt to him, or to gain his aid, it were well to reflect.

Still, again, eating the Lord's Supper, as Paul describes it, is not to increase our moral obligations. There could not be a more false or hurtful notion than the one so generally accepted, that observing this ordinance is coming under certain bonds of purity, charity, and devotion. I pray you, is abstaining from it, then, an escape from such bonds? Verily, we are under bonds already. Infinitely bound are we beforehand to love and serve God, to do good always to our fellow-men, and to honor and obey Jesus Christ the moment he, in his life and spirit, is made known to us. These obligations

we cannot by any step of ours create, more than we could the universe. By no omission or excuse can we run from them, more than, by our silence or speed, we could hide or get away from the laws of nature around us, or in our own being. Any who fancy, that, by neglecting the ritual of religious love and worship, they are exempting themselves from the eternal commands of equity and piety, do but rush to the woful execution of the commands they would avoid. Eating the Lord's Supper reminds us of our obligations, and may assist us to fulfil them, but does not originally impose them, or add to their essential weight or number.

In fine, according to the mind of the apostle, eating the Lord's Supper is not swearing an oath. The Romish dogma, that the communicant eats the real flesh and drinks the real blood of Christ, and thus assumes a vow and performs a sacrament, such as men have sealed with awful ceremonies and signed in their heart's gore, is a fancy no less unscriptural than irrational, and contrary especially to the discourse of Christ. As though to guard against this very mistake and conclusion of moral debility, after addressing his disciples in this vivid imagination of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, he affirms, "The words that I speak unto you are spirit, and they are life." As much as to say, "It is no physical or literal meaning I intend by them, but a sense of spiritual, cordial communion with my own feeling and mind." So he stops

their murmur at what they were at first inclined to think a hard saying. So he authoritatively shuts off all gross interpretations, early or late, of his language. So he transforms these elements from all material coarseness, and fills them with an immortal vitality. For no explanation of his own language should we be more grateful. It were a very little thing, in comparison, to have or partake of Christ's body; but it is a great thing to have and partake of his spirit and soul.

Let us now consider, more positively, what to eat the Lord's Supper is. First, as a showing forth of his death, it is the highest manifestation of the divine love. So, in the Scriptures, the death of Christ, the sinless Son of God, is described. Such a significance we may well find in the table, whose very food seemed to be the sacrifice that he made. The natural mercy of God is manifested in our daily bread and the water-spring. So it was fitting that the nourishing loaf, and the water turned into wine, should be chosen for its lively tokens by his supernatural mercy. There is here an ascending scale of symbols, raised to their highest power and refined to the utmost degree. The elements of bread and wine are shadows of the Saviour's broken body and flowing blood. But these again are emblems and extreme testimonies of the fatherly grace, that would, at such cost, save the dead in trespasses. In the supper there is a representation of the cross, a picture, carried to the very last ex-

pressiveness with which the finger of God's own spirit could touch it, of superhuman anxiety in the very heavens to pardon and redeem the guilty. No picture of aught else transpiring under the sun has, in power to move, approached any comparableness with this. How else, indeed, could the Deity himself have spoken in a voice so clear to waken, and so kind to assure! This, in truth, is the atonement or reconciliation of the depraved and alienated human soul with God; for it seems put before us as proving a mercy no depravity or alienation can resist. The unblemished one expires to bring forgiveness to those all spotted over with iniquity; by his agony to deliver men from the very sin that nailed him to the tree, and cure in them the plague of their own hearts under which he fell. Surely, benevolence, though almighty, could no further go, nor find any more expressive language in which to speak. Human thought or imagination could not compass a more signal demonstration of God's love. All that nature means by the body's food and refreshment is first made the token of that heart which burst and bled in anguish, because so it could express a more effectual benignity; and that heart, thus fainting away in utter weakness of mortality, and breathing out its last pains in prayers for those inflicting them, is then made a token of the disposition of God towards the spirit in man.

This meaning of the Lord's Supper, as the supreme sign of divine love, let us now observe, falls

in with all that is best in human thought and knowledge. It is a fact of singular and transcendent beauty, that all discovery, through all history, in all the world, has been but the gradual and ever cumulative discovery of the goodness of God. At first, on the rough and stormy earth, where so much seemed adverse to human comfort, the fancy naturally rose in men's minds, of hostile as well as friendly divinities, of rival kingdoms of good and evil, of some malignity of a personal Satan, or essential evil of matter. But lo! marvellously, all invention, all progressive insight, has been of the kindness of the one Maker and Ruler. Every upturned layer of the earth discloses the amount of happy life he has been continually forming. The most fiery and irresistible elements illustrate their Author's love, originally infused into them, in becoming man's mighty servants to confer countless inestimable benefits of intercourse and improvement. Sharp, corroding fluids yield an ether that laps distress in oblivion, or changes it from dreadful torture to a happy dream; and poisons themselves are transmuted into medicines more precious than gold and gems, once alone prized, from the same subterranean mines. The gulfs and precipices, once thought to demonstrate and lay bare the divine displeasure, prove to be but revelations of creative benignity. Man's discovery is no discovery of aught malign in the creation, but a continual reduction of the domain of evil, promising

to bring it at last, in the perception of nature and unfolding of the soul, to the point of sheer nothingness and utter extinction.

Now, all this scientific discovery of God's goodness is but a ladder to the highest point of that goodness revealed in the gospel, whose crown is in the death of Christ, and whose celebration is in the Lord's Supper. This fathoming and publishing of nature, as collateral and confirmatory of the glad tidings of grace, has an unparalleled sublimity. So sitting at the Lord's table, and confiding in the divine love, no contradiction comes to us from without. This growing agreement of nature and Christianity is destined to work the greatest of all revolutions. Before this brightening radiance from below and above, all gloomy views of God's feeling to his children, and all dark systems of theology, must pass away. God is indeed holy, hates what is unholy, and is willing, beyond all earthly parental endurance, that his disobedient offspring should, as the penalty for their sins, bear any misery by which they may be made partakers of his holiness. But we thank him, that both nature and revelation, with redoubling accord, declare that this is the object of all suffering.

Verily, if there be that vast hell of omnipotent vengeance which has been so long and vehemently pretended, in none of our researches into this fair and glorious universe have we found the door. We have, in no astronomic journeyings of our

mind, reached the entrance, nor dug down to the springs of mischief and divine hate beneath. As the dark, repulsive hue in which the Chinese, on their maps of the globe, used to paint all save their own Celestial Empire, has fled before the light of knowledge; so that local hell, which has been made the hemisphere of God's creation, is vanishing away. Night itself, which seems to divide the dominion of the universe with day, turns out to be but a little shadowy cone, revolving round each globe to wrap its inhabitants in needful and merciful slumber; while the vast universe is full of light, presenting but a material emblem of the immense goodness of God.

All this is but a parallelism between nature and revelation. His anger endureth but a moment: his loving-kindness is for ever. Christianity only lifts up and carries on this strengthening natural conviction of our Creator's goodness. The Lord's Supper, as the great peculiar symbol of the spiritual fact, especially tells us that our Father is pure, essential love, in long-suffering and willingness to forgive. Nothing can refute its witness, that, when he chastens, it is still love, not hatred, that wields the scourge; and that his wrath to the wicked is but his kindness for their case. The gospel surely declares an unceasing, indissoluble connection between wrong-doing and wretchedness; affirms the woe of the wicked as a class, but not — no, never! — the anguish of any one individual soul as infinite

or endless; far less that boundless agony of millions, based by interpreters of Christ on a monstrous perversion and exaggeration of his words. So alone it corresponds to that universe of God, in which is no atom or crevice without a living creature that experiences his good-will. This is the great idea in God's works and word, having its finest token and emblematic spiritual culmination in the Lord's Supper.

But, as eating the Lord's Supper is a recognition of this divine love, it is, too, a corresponding expression of our own love. It should be regarded and observed in all the largeness and liberality of this idea. It was not meant by Christ, as it has been often made by man, to be a subtle, tormenting test, on minor points, of formal custom or intellectual opinion. Wonderful and wicked transformation of this charitable board into a severe confessional, an inquisitorial rack, or the platform of any creed less broad than faith and love to him! He that has, and would signify, this faith and love, according to Christ's own standard, is qualified for his communion. He may, in many things, dissent from us or from others in his thought, and may be mistaken in his thinking. He may, in much of his life, fall short of God's glory. Who in nothing is mistaken, or falls short?

But all the troublesome theories, arising or imposed, are, in the light of the new covenant itself, brought down to one which may indeed be sharper

and stricter than any, or all beside, and to which those otherwise most rigid may give place. Do we love Jesus Christ? Does our heart flow to him as the chief among ten thousand? and is he the one, altogether lovely, we have wanted to fill our soul? The desire of all nations, do we find him also the only perfect satisfaction ever embodied for even a single and solitary heart? When made known to us, does he take in us the place of honor and principal regard, that, to him, of all that ever breathed, belongs? Does this prince sit with his Father, king on the inner throne, while all usurpers of the sceptre retire? Then, indeed, is there a place for us at his table. Our right is there. No man, no banded ecclesiastic sway, no sectarian or papal excommunication, can dispossess us of our seat. The absolute Disposer assigns it. Virtually, potentially, it is ours, whether in actual allowance or not. Ours, at least, shall be a place at the table, now but in vision, which is above! Eating the Supper is the sign of our love, as sacred in the thought of the Most High as it is blessed to our own souls. But if we have no such emotion; if our being is not thus sensitive to the excellency and beauty of Jesus; if he does not stir our wish and emulation with all that is heavenly, and for all that is humane in his character and life, then, whatever we may do, or outwardly appear to do, we do not eat his Supper. We perform only a feigned and hollow service.

Furthermore, to eat the Lord's Supper, according to the universal law of exercise, is to increase the love it expresses. This law holds peculiarly of all true affections and right exertions. The waxing love for Christ is its highest illustration. It especially is a magnet whose use enhances its power. It is true our love for Christ is a spiritual love for a now spiritual being, whom our fleshly eye never saw, or mortal ear heard. It is true we can cherish that love by pure meditation in the silence and secesy of the soul, and magnify it in our daily conversation and life. It is true that its finest shape is action; its strongest auxiliary, real imitation of Jesus. But, as we are creatures, not of conscience and will only, but of sentiment and imagination, one important method in which our love to him may thrive will be by uttering, and breathing it out also, in the way himself opened and hallowed for its channel, till it swell with the mingled sympathies of all Christian ages and lands, and receive mysterious contributions from that heavenly country which is not cut off from ours, save by ascent and continuation, as the mountain is from the plain. As the love of God is encouraged in us, not only by certain deeds which show it forth, but by all our worship, by every grateful prayer and loud hosanna, — as love among friends needs a like renewing, and is refreshed by every greeting and look and pressure that passes between their tongues and eyes and hands; so is it in this affectionate,

reciprocal salutation of the Saviour and his disciples. For the supper, according to Christ's mind, in the New Testament teaching and apostolic practice, is not only commemoration of him, but also communion with him. So the love of the Master and the follower is no antiquarian tradition. Truly, of what worth is love, if not personal? This Christian love passes and repasses, with God's own spirit, the great conveyancer of all good things, like a dove through the air, and knits those who share it together. The feeling below tends to rise to the level of that from which it runs, on high.

Eating the Lord's Supper, thus expressing and increasing our love, furthermore supplies the loftiest and most efficient motive to all duty. All our life, all earnest labor, flows out of our heart. We give all, by natural and inevitable consequence, to him to whom we have first given our heart. Eating the Lord's Supper, therefore, while it may seem merely formal, is of all things most practical. It does not end as an exhibition or ceremony. It nerves to toil, endurance, and sacrifice, for the sake of God and humanity. It has been the spring of a thousand currents of philanthropy and holy zeal, in all directions crossing the earth, and bearing more benefit than its rivers and streams. It has lighted and borne on the torch for every forlorn hope of the world. It has prompted numberless offerings of benevolence. No barren tree has it been, taking room here in the earthly vineyard only to cumber

the ground; no fountain long since strangled, or ancient channel now dry and stony; no obsolete form, quenched fire, or monotony of unmeaning words; but, like a living figure travelling down from remote antiquity, it still moves and acts and inspires the souls of men. Whoever, in a conceit of superior wisdom, may neglect or oppose it, it will not be destroyed, or become disused; but, with its associations and suggestions, will continue, the clearest material medium, held out in this lower air, of the human and divine, to blend invisible spirits together, and fulfil precious offices of consoling sorrow and urging to fidelity. It is indeed an embodiment of the peculiar character of our religion, as distinguished from other religions, in not being a system of abstract doctrines and precepts, that can be put into words; but the life of a divine person, in vital communication with his votaries. In this characteristic is the everlasting strength and success of the gospel.

In fine, the Lord's Supper, while thus empowering for earthly duty, prepares us for scenes beyond this passing world. Its shadow falls two ways, back into time, and forth into eternity. It wings the soul to fly in another atmosphere, beyond this grosser air. So much Jesus himself intimates to his disciples, in referring to a future celebration of the communion in his Father's kingdom, where the desires of the Christian heart may find fitting scope and abundant food for evermore. Here those de-

sires are developed in some degree, and clothe themselves in many a word and deed of blessing. But the experience of every regenerate soul would show how much is inwardly nursed in the chambers of the spirit, which cannot yet be outwardly proved, or make for itself any recognizable expression. It is preparation for the world to come. It is making ready for the second coming of Christ. On this principle of preparation for future emergencies, we proceed in every part of our existence. Before our eyes are familiar instances, in the seed sown in spring-days for a distant harvest; the house reared in summer for the winter ice and snow; the ship built in mild weather to breast the fiercest gale that ever blew over the waves; and the fort, sleeping in peaceful sunshine, with the swallows flying and nestling under its silent eaves, storing its thunder for possible invasion and assault.

Shall we extend this principle of preparation in all that is palpably useful, no further, but let it stop with the brink of the grave? Taking but a step in our little footing in this world, shall we not receive that staff of the bread of life which helps us to take the next, the second step, beyond the grave? Shall we not build for heaven, nor provide for fruit and harvesting on the eternal shore, nor guard against the peril and trouble threatened as the woful welcome of the wicked in their onward path? Truly we will employ every opportunity and means to cultivate the inclinations that, in a better region,

may be met and fulfilled. While we eat and drink to be strengthened for a journey, — that we may have vigor for the last journey to a long home, we will eat the Lord's Supper.

Ah! in its true sense and meaning, both for present support and coming exigencies, we need the Lord's Supper. All the ministrations of this world cannot satisfy our appetite, that immortal hunger and thirst with which God has made our souls to be hungry and thirsty. What indeed are we but creatures of aspiration, and, in the beautiful phrase of prophecy, prisoners of hope? This discontent with ourselves, and with every thing about us, is our dignity. This pressing on to something purer is our glory. All that has been, and all that is, in human character and doings, how imperfect and unsatisfactory! Looking at the facts of history, or at the state of our own hearts, we blush and despair. But, looking at our capacities and expectations in the light of God's countenance, in the face of Jesus Christ, we take courage. The Lord's Supper is the sustenance of that striving after eternal life, —

“Which away,
We are but gilded loam or painted clay.”

The reason of its hold on the heart is, that it meets these aspirations; and the objection, that it refers to no utility of the day, is its recommendation. The last message and lesson of the Lord's Supper is

aspiration. Quickened by his body and blood, our grovelling nature soars as on pinions. When we trusted to bear ourselves on by our own hand and will, our motion was slow; but catching, through our Lord's prayer and pain, the breath of the Holy Spirit, we speed on our way, as the vessel that has been dragged, or has floated and drifted heavily down the narrow inland frith, unfurls her sails to the ocean-breeze. Blow, O thou Spirit of God! through thy Son, on our souls, and bear us along to our blessed destiny.

DISCOURSE VII.

THE CHRISTIAN REVOLUTION.

Luke ii. 34. — THIS CHILD IS SET FOR THE FALL AND RISING AGAIN
OF MANY IN ISRAEL.

THIS bold prediction was uttered by an old man, ready to die, over that feeblest of earthly things, an infant, of a month old, just able to be borne to the temple, for the usual consecration, by the Jews, of their sons to the Lord. It was a prediction of a new power, born in Jesus Christ, to put down and raise up, in a world morally disordered and out of joint; till, by sinking wrong and lifting right, a more just and beneficent order might be established. It was the pre-announcement of a revolution so grand as to contain all other revolutions, for justice and good, in its own source, Among the ways in which Christianity took body and form on earth, this master-revolution, or falling and rising, was one.

Could we transport ourselves back to the prophet's time, and be imbued with all its prevailing notions and prepossessions, with the public opinion of its privileged classes, save only one obscure hope

in the common heart, the prophecy might seem absurdly audacious. But, after thirty years shed their sunshine and rain on his tomb, there commenced a wonderful fulfilment, which has never ceased going on, of what he foretold.

Many, said the seer, should fall, and many should rise. Precisely so it was. Priest and high priest, with knife and sacrifice, with robe and censer, fell from their high estate before the growth of that child. Levites, in all their numerous ranks, that opened and guarded the temple-door, sang in the temple-service, or gave their official dignity to the thirty-five sacred cities they inhabited, fell from their universal command of the minds and consciences of their countrymen. Pharisees, with their affectation of holiness, and Sadducees, in their conceit of wisdom and pride of unbelief, fell from their aristocracy of position before the child whom they would scorn and persecute and crucify. While these many fell, to make good both parts of the prophecy, other many rose. Mean fishermen, from their nets on the sea and shore of Galilee; and despised publicans, from their tax-gathering tables; common men, servile in Judea or plebeian at Rome, rose into ability and influence. Simple women, too, who had desired only to sit at their lords' and teachers' feet, rose into the purest fame, and had their names enshrined on the tablets of the highest history, to be read thankfully in enduring glory, long as the world should stand; while Pilate

and Herod, and Annas and Caiaphas, and Festus and Felix, — ay, and Cæsar himself, save only in that imperial title, common to all the rulers of the earth's mistress, — fell, and went down for ever.

But for no merely personal fall or rising did the prophet intend to say that child was born ; as though his birth portended enmity against some, or favor to others. There could be no partiality or hatred in the design of him who is no respecter of persons, but the God alike of Jew and Gentile, Indian and African. Jesus was set but to oppose certain principles that were wrong, and to countenance and exalt principles that were right. Only according as persons were attached to one or the other set of these principles, they, with the principles, rose or fell. The notion of the Jews that they were the only people of God ; the idea of a local deity limiting his regards to a little province, and neglecting the outspread regions of the globe ; the bigoted dogma, that there was no salvation but for the chosen tribes, and that the salvation itself was but a worldly thing of political triumph ; the puerile fancy, not yet banished from the world, that certain authorized ancient forms were the only channel through which the grace of God could flow, or the prayers and offerings of men be accepted ; and the ambitious expectation of subduing the whole race of mankind to the supreme control of the Sanhedrim's withered traditions ; — all these things, all this haughtiness of spirit, and all this

swollen pomp and lofty pretension of ecclesiastical ceremony, was doomed to fall. But, as they fell, other things arose. God's fatherly love for all his children, counting none naturally alien or disinherited; Christ's teaching and death, and example of immortality for the redemption of all, of the barbarian in his skins, and the slave in his rags, as well as of the priestly scarlet or royal purple; the duty of men everywhere to love and serve one another as brethren; the spirituality of true worship, so that God could receive and bless it, though it were not rendered in Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim; and, with all these things, the consequent liberty they produce and require for body and soul, — oh, what a rising of new principles on the face of the earth was here! At first, glimmering but as stars in the east, dim on the horizon; yet, through clouds of ignorance and superstition, they rose. Yea, for their everlasting embodiment, Jesus Christ himself, at his appearance, despised and rejected as the meteor of an hour, that would speedily shoot down to be quenched in the ground, rose as the sun of righteousness upon the world.

The old ideas, in short, with those who clung to them, fell; the new ideas, with their advocates, rose, gained a footing, and multiplied adherents. They inoculated the best of the Hebrew blood itself into their transmission. They ran through tribes and nations with their persuasive eloquence. They wrote their meaning on the fresh mind of the age,

clearer than the letters on Hebrew parchments and phylacteries. They cut their rules in the heart, deeper than the laws of Rome on her brazen tables. Indeed, the old Rome and the old Jerusalem fell; and a new Rome and a new Jerusalem, of religion and law, arose as from under ground, out of the dust of the ancient decay, turning tombs into a resurrection. The ideas, once represented by a poor man, who had not so much as the fox's hole or the bird's nest where to lay his head, at length clothed themselves with authority, sat down on the throne of nations, to survive a thousand dynasties,—truly, some sign of an accomplishing of trembling Simeon's scarce-regarded prophecy, when the child was taken from Mary's tender hands into his wasted arms for a blessing!

But the ideas that fell, and the ideas that rose, did not fall or rise as mere abstractions. Christ's new principles were not points of sight in some philosopher's eye, making by their splendor a temporary stir, but having little hold on the general feeling of humanity, and no power to change the thought or practice of the race. Pure ideas the perception of most men is too gross to appreciate. So, in the wisdom of God, Christ expressed his ideas in institutions. Thus, again, some institutions fell, and others rose, through the agency of that child, born in Bethlehem, and carried up to the capital of the land for circumcision. Yes, for all his followers the bloody rite itself, which he suffered, fell; and

instead thereof rose the beautiful symbol of baptism by water, putting its soft, gracious drops for that sharp and angry edge. The bitter herbs fell from the table of the passover, and the board of communion rose, crowned with nourishing bread and strengthening wine. The Israelitish ritual fell, with the temple where it was celebrated; but finer emblems of Heaven's goodness and man's cleansing from sin arose. The narrow synagogue, with its hard prejudices and severe exclusions, fell; the Christian church, with open doors and generous invitations of all into her shepherd's fold, arose. Pagan temples, idolatrous groves, chambers of vile imagery, altars of animal and human sacrifice, shrines of base and evil passions, refuges of lies, habitations of cruelty, with many a high place of lust and monument of strife, fell; while institutions of philanthropy, asylums for the poor and weak and aged, hospitals for the sick and insane, for the blind and deaf and dumb, retreats for the unfortunate, the sinful, and to human view ruined, — things absolutely undreamed of before Christ, in Egypt or Assyria, — arose. Even the gaol itself has at last risen, transformed from a black hole in the ground, or more appalling dungeon at the bottom of a castle, into the look of a palace, and the health and decency of a human abode, retaining only the needful security and strictness of treatment, making the mute granite even of its fearful walls to speak of the hard manners, through that Nazarene child

fallen and displaced, and the better customs risen and built up. Such a commonwealth as this could have been founded in December snows, by a handful only of that child's votaries, and, in its infancy, lifted up from the oppressor's heel, by nothing but the power of freedom with which that child has inspired the human soul. His invisible hand, with the stroke of steel and the shoulder's lift, has wrought in every rising meeting-house and village, in every school for instruction and hall of liberty for debate. That hand, which has smitten political and religious tyranny to the ground, was not, like many a red and mighty hand in this world, destroyer only, but architect also; and, to the temporary sword it sent on the earth, it adds the everlasting works of peace. Yet every struggle all over the earth, for just law and true independence, draws nerve and stimulus from that same hand, whose slight, infantile pressure and gentle motion alone could be perceived at the time of Simeon's prophecy, but which has since so ploughed up the world. Yet is it still mild and holy as it is strong. To no fierce passions or wanton rebellions has Jesus Christ given rise; but he educates the nations for the advancing freedom he bestows.

But beneath this ample outward theatre of sinking and ascending shapes and figures with which he, beyond any other, has marvellously crowded the stage of time, is that private human heart which shall survive all thrones and dominions, principa-

lities and powers, and which is for ever the field and test of the highest power. In that, how much has Christ made to fall and to rise! How much fear and doubt and sin, that, through ages and tribes of antiquity, brooded dark-winged over the soul and eclipsed the heaven of future joy from man's imagination, have fallen before the child, whose childhood God did not let Herod extinguish, because he meant his manhood to be the crown and blessing of the world! How much faith and hope, and undying love for undying objects, have risen out of the words which he dropped with low accents into the air of Palestine, when it was soft on the land, or roared along the lake, but of which, through all change and passing away of heaven and earth, human memory will never lose its grasp! What grossness of worship fell through him, and what purity rose! It were hard, indeed, to say what we should now have been, had existence, in such immensely altered circumstances, been granted us, without any thing having ever fallen or risen through the transcendent virtue of that born Redeemer. Perhaps heathen polytheists running to the hill-top or the stream, after various gods, with our offerings; or savage worshippers, offering draughts of crimson gore to the mysterious Invisible Ones; or unnatural parents, sending our children through the fire to "Moloch, horrid king;" abjectly creeping into caves and forests to adore the awful secrecy of nature; hiding in walled inte-

rior recesses to perform ordinances of superstition and shame ; or, at best, like the more enlightened Athenians, adding to the pantheon of the prevailing theology one unknown God ; and, when the pleasures and toils of this earthly state should be over, resigning ourselves to the thick darkness of that death which would have cast its deep shadow over all our life ; as it is said, it took the Egyptian kings all their lives long to make the huge pyramid tombs of rock in which they were at last to lie down.

Thank God for the difference of our situation ! Thank God for that child of his, who has loosened and caused to fall so much of that dead weight of ignorance and vice, heavy as the fetters of the grave, which, in the masses of men, has dragged down so many old kingdoms to destruction ; and who has diffused the knowledge and inspired the virtue to which we trust for our social, civil, human deliverance and exaltation. The world does not, by a great deal, through all its ranks march in perfect order yet ; but thank God for that Captain of salvation, the great Leader, above all before or since ; at whose word of command the mighty hosts of humanity are bending to the line, and moving forward to their slow but certain and irreversible victories.

So, in fine, the pivot, on which all this rising or falling is made to turn, is character. The revolution of character fundamentally embraces every

beneficent alteration in human fortunes. The wrong state of human character, which Christ would rectify, is represented under various analogies; sometimes as sickness or insanity or as death, from which the mind is to be healed, restored, raised. According to the figure of falling or rising, it is not native badness in any desire, but a disproportion, which is to be corrected; as, in an unjust and evil condition of a country, some elements are uppermost that ought to be depressed, and some kept under that should be exalted. To set all right, there must be a revolution. How great that revolution has already been in the very idea of character! In the common worldly appreciation when Christ came, and too much in the fact of life and the judgment of men still, physical prowess, strength of will, brute courage, self-esteem, resentment of injuries, pursuit of one's own wealth and honor and happiness, have been the supreme qualities. He would and has put them comparatively down, to elevate into their place of predominance, meekness, humility, patience, forgiveness, disinterestedness, benevolence, love of God, and preferring one another in honor. His proposal is, indeed, radical and revolutionary. For the model of private character, that is established and prevails, will involve every thing else on earth, and give law and order to society, government, and every department of existence. Like the little pattern of perfect beauty, after which huge structures are built, it will present the lines, according to which

every institution and relation must be fashioned. When the leaning tower of the soul is lifted to its uprightness, the whole vast building of humanity will be fair and straight; and only by overturning and overturning in the breast shall the ancient prophecy for the race of men be fulfilled.

Brethren, has all fallen that ought to fall, and all risen that ought, through that child, to rise in our characters and lives? Has all that is vain and arrogant in our souls sunk with the sanctuaries of pagan error, and all love of pleasure and selfish power gone to the ground, with the tents of barbarian self-indulgence and the classic structures of polished vice? On the altered face of the earth, bearing up so many courts of the Most High dedicated through Christ, has every good sentiment and design risen with the towers and spires? Then is old Simeon's prophecy, respecting the child he blessed, for us fulfilled.

DISCOURSE VIII.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER.

1 Cor. v. 7. — FOR EVEN CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED
FOR US.

THE allusion here is to the great religious celebration of the Jews, with the historic events on which it was founded. After four hundred and thirty years' captivity in Egypt, as hewers of wood, drawers of water, and makers of brick for the great buildings of that country, — the only reply to their groaning under their burdens being the exaction of bricks without the straw that had been provided to mix with the clay, or heat the kilns, or cover their work from the sun, — God sent miraculous judgments to constrain the oppressor to release these poor Hebrew slaves from the yoke of bondage. The royal tyrant, Pharaoh, would not, however, yield, till the divine justice, sharpening its strokes upon his stiff obstinacy, came in a new visitation, in which all the first-born of Egypt were slain by a destroying angel ; while the Israelites, having been commanded to put a mark of blood upon the door-posts of their dwellings, were passed over. Ever

after, they observed a rite, which they called the Passover.

The apostle, writing, not for Jews alone, but for all converts to Christianity, gives this title of the Passover to Christ, to indicate the deliverance from evil which he affords to his disciples. Well chosen, and still universally applicable, is the illustration. For truly the destroying angel was not only in that keen and sudden death, which, so long ago, went through the abodes of those tawny oriental children of the sun. That destroying angel, in some shape, all of woman born have seen. He walks the road is present at many an angle of our journey, and stands at the end of every mortal's pilgrimage. He sends pain and sickness, as couriers before, to announce his coming. He leaves sorrow behind, a dark form issuing from the tomb he has opened, to be his representative and remembrancer. He harasses the mind with fear and anxiety about the future, and points, with his devouring sword, ever to the dust whence man came, and whereunto he must return.

Justly divines the apostle, that how to be rescued from this sad condition and ruinous fate is for all men the question. Christ, he says, is our passover; that is, he makes this destroying angel pass over us. The blood of his self-sacrifice, through which he showed heaven's love, and from which he rose to prove man's immortality, with virtue like that of the paschal lamb, sprinkled by the Jews over

their portals on the banks of the Nile, keeps off the destroying angel, or makes him go by, with all his terror, from our souls.

I propose to present some of the shapes in which this destroying angel appears, and, by Christ our Redcemer, is dismissed. But, first, I must meet one or two objections, which the idea of this discourse may suggest. Some may think this passing over, by the destroying angel, of a part of the world,—that part, namely, visited by the light and salvation of the gospel,—seems partial and unequal. To this I can only answer, God proceeds, in his revelation, as he does in all his providence. The problem of the equity of his administration among his creatures is altogether too vast for our solving. His own wisdom alone is the measure of his justice. Many questions should we have to ask, without reaching any fundamental answer, before we could fathom this infinite and amazing subject. We feel God's goodness; and, for his equity, our inmost conviction and highest intuition stands voucher. We, moreover, see the evidences of his truth and love spreading through the universe; but we cannot, in the world of actual circumstance and fact, by our poor skill, free his attributes from every difficulty. We might ask why God has made one of his creatures an angel, and another a worm; why he has caused one to dwell under the tropic line, and another at the frozen pole; why he has ordained one to be born of a poor, and another

of a prosperous parentage ; why he has bestowed such immense diversity of individual endowments, rocking genius and idiocy successively in the same cradle ; why, in the same region, he has appointed such enormous differences of outward lot ; why, for thousands of years, he delayed discoveries so important to darkened and suffering humanity, such as the press, the compass, the bright sky-marks of a trackless voyage, or the ether-breath under which the piercing knife is painless. Enough that, at length, we have these passovers of the divine mercy. Enough, above all, that we have in Christ the chief passover of the keenest agonies of the human heart.

But this doctrine of the passover, marvelled at by the skeptical, is resented by the proud, fancying they are unwilling to receive such gratuity. They would emancipate themselves from the miseries that assail human life ; they would slay the monsters of danger, and deal with the giant of despair, for themselves ; nor superfluously accept a heaven they have not earned. Ah ! fine and admirable presumption of equal terms and even-handed wrestling with the Almighty ! Ah ! poor pride, empty claim of independence, infatuated and false denial of that grace of God which is the source of all we have or enjoy ! When celestial goodness is at the beginning and end of every thing we are or possess, — of our first being and every happy hour, — of each friend, progenitor, teacher, that has blessed

our days, — of whatever is glad in experience, pleasant in memory, or bright in hope, — of every harvest from the field, and every blessing of civilization, — arrogance grave and profound, indeed, to rise at last upon the heap of providential benefits, and say we will, unaided, take care of our own spiritual and immortal interests, and want no pass-over of our transgression and woe! Truly, we should have begun sooner to sign off and separate, if we meant to complain of the free grace and unmerited favor of God. It is too late. We are baptized in goodness, and immersed in love, from our infancy. For all things, temporal or spiritual, we are beggars, dependent on God. Without any inconsistency can we accept his last unspeakable gift of Christ, the passover of iniquity and anguish for our souls.

But it is important to observe, that this passover is no contradiction or exemption of true morality. It is no passover for our exertions of virtuous fidelity. It only modifies the character of our virtue, to exalt and refine it. It makes it no longer a rough and haughty Roman virtue, or a selfish and partisan Greek virtue, or a savage and passionate, a Gentile and barbarian virtue; but for that show of wisdom in will-worship, which the apostle rebukes, it substitutes the at once gentler and holier virtue of that devotion to God, to right and duty, which Christ the passover inspires.

Indeed there is nothing immoral, or dangerous to

character, in the doctrine of the text. The passover, at Christ's bidding, of the destroying angel, is for no license, but for our sanctity. For the contemplation of that sacrifice, producing this passover, stirs affections in the breast from which flow sweeter virtues, and more winning charms of spontaneous worth, than all the self-confidence of sages, and all the austerities of the stoic. It secures an excellence greater than our own will, tugging at the strings of its absolute resolutions, ever attained. It unfolds, in the peculiarities of the Christian teaching and form of excellence, power to renew the soul greater than can be found in any generalization of the gospel into some supposed wider philosophy. Christ, by his submission our passover, begets from the heart's gratitude a piety, purity, and charity, transcending all that the world has known; and spurs those forgiven and reconciled by him to escape the offences, of which he, above all, makes them feel the plague and sore. Accordingly, we are required to keep the feast, — once of the Passover, but now of his Supper, — not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The reference here is to the fact, that the Jews were obliged to run from their Egyptian tyrants with such haste, that they had to take their cakes without leaven. So, ever after, without leaven, with their loins girt, sandals on their feet, and staves in their hands, they ate them in the passover. Even with such haste,

Christ our passover, by his spirit, stimulates us to leave the bondage of our oppressive sins.

Thus, seeing the idea of Christ the passover, not as a mere figure of rhetoric, but, beyond all objections, resting on a foundation of eternal truth, we may consider its practical applications; for we, as much as captive Jew or old Gentile, need the divine passover.

The destroying angel comes in many ways to close in a struggle with our safety and peace. As we meditate in solitude, or muse by the wayside, he often springs upon us. Sometimes, a gigantic spectre of doubt, he fearfully overhangs our thoughts, and duskily obscures our path. He darkly queries with us, whether all these spiritual things, which we, in our words of fine discourse and illustration, make such account of, are not mere imagination and surmise. He questions with us, whether there be a God to pray to, or a heaven to go to, or any permanent being in us beyond a cunning composition of the clod of the valley. And lo! as he thus talks and threatens, our heart within us becomes dry and hollow before him. The shining mansions above fade away into mist and vacuity; and temples and closets, songs and supplications, turn to a vain pretence, or a hypocritical mockery. But Christ the passover comes through his spirit to make the heavenly glory shine again on the world, and gleam through our thoughts by his truth. He reconstructs the New Jerusalem in our

vision ; and the brooding spectre, like that old destroying angel in Egypt, flees, scared from the nest which the bringer of life and immortality to light wants for his dwelling.

Again, in the gloomy and menacing shape of remorse, comes the destroying angel. He arrays before us all our wrong-doings and omissions of duty. He throws in our face all the short-comings of the past. He stings our memory into the recollection of unworthiness we had forgotten. He shows the countenance of infinite Purity, affronted with our many corruptions, and frowning upon us in stern and steady displeasure. With heavy blows of malicious industry, he roughens the path of our approach to our Maker, and busily blocks up every way of expiation and prayer. He brings into view the long, melancholy retrospect of harsh penances and bloody offerings, by man, of the beast of the field, and of his own flesh, in uncertain and futile striving for a perfect atonement and peace. He lifts his ghostly, resistless hand, to cast us down into hopeless dejection over the remaining sin that clings to our nature, and into utter despair of the mercy of God. But Christ appears with his look of kindness ; with his voice of gentleness, he speaks the pardoning love of God, and the destroying angel's condemnation is silenced ; while that midnight blackness of supernatural and terrifying visage, with which, as of yore in the land of Egypt, he stoops upon us, passes over.

In the shape of a mourner, too, as well as a doubter and accuser, comes the destroying angel. He sits by the fireside, at the table, and the grave, when dear objects have gone, and raises a miserable cry, that all comfort and joy, and reciprocity of affection, are gone and lost with them. He suggests that the pleasant and happy days we have known shall come back no more: that the heart shall thrill no more, as once it did, with the tokens of generous regard; that the bright scenes of existence are all finally blotted, and its noble plans a hopeless, irrecoverable wreck. But as he thus goes on, Christ comes, and the destroying angel passes over. The cross of Christ rises in sight: and the petition that sounds up from it, sends back a paining rebuke that scatters our despondency. The blood that trickles down it, writes, in the signals of death, the promises of eternity: and puts upon every thing pure and good we have known or can conceive, the seal of an endless duration. The sepulchre of Christ discloses its broken door: and through the rent in that wall which hid the everlasting, we see with him the living host of youth and elders, while the destroying angel passes over. Now, grief may do its worst. We are superior to it, and have got the better of it. It no more flies in the air above us. By the Son of God it is forced to raise us above itself. It can lay waste the earth, and commit havoc in the abodes of men; but all its desolations are more than repaired.

It can come into the room, where is the mother with her babe on her knees, to extinguish that spark of life which has been more to her than the sun; and she shall say it is good in God to let it come and do so; for, to her grief, there is a pass-over.

Oh! without that passover to those afflicted and bereaved, in whom the affections have to the utmost been cultivated, what would the world be but like the Lybian desert, where rise fierce winds and storms of blinding sand against the traveller, struggling on amid the bleaching bones of former pilgrims, who have tried to journey that way? But, with Christ the passover, the eye of faith—

“Beholds the tempest passing by,
Sees evening shadows quickly fly,
And all serene in heaven.”

Every trouble loses power to injure us. Nay, night itself is not so dark, nor winter so hard, nor the gust so heavy, nor any disappointment so trying, nor mortal decline so depressing, because of him who makes the thunder of misfortune roll distant, or break without harm; and before whom all that could torment or drag down the soul passes over.

Christ our passover! Nothing that we dread shall sink upon us now with quenching flood or annihilating blow. In the bitter hour to our faith, a visionary form of real strength and glory shall arrive, and the gloomy messenger be displaced, and go by. Yea, when death himself shall draw nigh,

there will be one nearer and stronger to ward his strokes. Before the destroying angel's office is done on the body, that one will, by some sure token, by some speech to the heart, declare that he, too, grim executioner, must, for the soul, pass over.

Christ is our passover, for he presents God as our Father. Now, no father wishes his children to die; least of all, the real Father, the Father of spirits, who hath power to give his children life. Therefore death, the huge but hollow semblance, must pass over. Christ hath taught us that we can love God, and how to love him. But love is a bond of endurance according to all the ability of both its subject and object; with God it is a bond of immortality. Therefore death, with his mere masque and presumption of tyranny, must pass over. Christ hath taught us that the outward material universe, which seems as a vast gulf and immense whole, to devour and re-absorb all life, is not the Infinite All; but that God, a loving person, a boundless will, is all in all. So, what we call the universe shrinks at once, in a moment, within the limits of this divine conscious personality, which gives an assurance of solidity and duration to the free and personal character of God's individual offspring. Matter ceases to be all. Knowledge, love, will, becomes all. The unbounded grave contracts its domain. The vast creation becomes but the theatre, wherein the intelligences which the Great

Parent for ever inspires act out their thoughts and affections. It becomes the abode of innumerable hosts of spirits within the circle of the original and eternal Spirit, who owns, with them, the filial and indissoluble tie, and makes all subservient to their growth in goodness and blessedness ; while death, the phantom, passes over.

DISCOURSE IX.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST'S BLOOD.

xii. 24. — AND TO THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING, THAT SPEAKETH
BETTER THINGS THAN THAT OF ABEL.

quality of a voice is here strangely attributed to blood. Abel's blood; the blood sprinkled on the robe, and tabernacle in the Hebrew worship; the blood of Christ spoke. Yet, though this at first seem marvellous, the figure is just and natural. The property of a voice is to express the mind. Whatever, then, has this same property may be called a voice; and if it have it more eminently, — if, better than these sounding undulations of the atmosphere, it can bear a thought or a message, then it is, in some sense, more perfectly a voice.

Thus Abel's blood had a voice. He had not spoken with his lips, and expostulated, in passionate remonstrance, with his angry, assailing her. But the murderer soon found a way to an end to that fraternal pleading in the air. He reached the voice of Abel's mouth in his blood, doubt monstrously exulting that he could effect

tually silence him thus; when, lo! the blood, which the earth had been so quietly drinking up, began itself to speak. It smote upon his ear, and rose up into God's ear; and out of its red stillness on the ground, and its ascending steam to heaven, it rang and tingled upon him like the alarm of a pursuer and the knell of doom. What did it speak? No good or pleasant thing, verily! It cried for vengeance upon his unnatural and inhuman cruelty. Its dreadful appeal brought down, as an echo of his blow, the Almighty justice in a woful sentence of retribution. So, strong as any prayer was the voice of Abel's blood.

But, says our text, the blood of sprinkling, too, has a voice. The blood of sprinkling was the crowning part of the Jewish sacrificial worship. As expressive of human feeling, according to our definition, it cannot be better described than as a voice. Degenerating at last by use into a monotonous voice, or perverted sometimes into a lying and hypocritical one, it was, in its freshness, neither mechanical nor false; but a real voice, a grand and lively language between the infant soul and its Inspirer. It spoke better things than the voice of Abel's blood; for it spoke of no evil passions, violent deeds, or awful punishment; but only of acts of devotion, and penitent, holy desires. It told of hands, not raised to slay or smite mankind, but lifted to adore God; and of hearts, not swelling with envy or flaming into wrath, but throbbing only with thank-

fulness and burning with love for the great Author, and for every fellow-creature. It was a voice, on various occasions, of manifold meaning; not of the one idea so often in dogmatic creeds supposed. It declared remorse for sin, or a pure frame and behavior in religious services, grateful acknowledgment of the divine goodness or reconciliation, atonement with the divine spirit, and submissive agreement to the terms of the divine law. Coming through an appointed sacrifice, it had the advantage of being a double voice, of heaven as well as earth; so responding on God's part to man's worship, with mercy and forgiveness, covenant and command.

Accordingly, the voice of Christ's blood, which is metaphorically in the text called the blood of sprinkling, pronounced the same wide volume of meaning. Beyond arbitrary characters in the letter of the Testament; beyond ordinary forms of human speech and the preacher's tones, it spoke the willingness of him who was unblemished, like the Jewish lamb, to bleed for no fault of his own; but, under the shafts discharged by others' iniquity, like a dumb victim, to work out, far as his unstained soul and body could, the anguish of their transgression; while enduring the malice of the immediate agents of his death, to bare his person to the full blast and shock of wretchedness from the fearful mystery and incomprehensible necessity of the whole world's transgression, and publish, in groans and dying sighs, more touching

than any voice, though it should fill the heavens and spread over the earth, the richness of a love, not otherwise communicable, desirous, at such expense, to cure and wipe away the inveterate plague and sorrow of the human soul. Surely, this voice of Christ's blood, speaking so much from him, should from us speak back, more than all, that old repentance, gratitude, and reconciliation, which were spoken in the blood of tens of thousands of lambs and firstlings, poured out under the knife of the priests at Jerusalem.

Blood, which is the life and symbol of the spirit, and which the Jews were forbidden, under the law's extreme penalty, to eat, hath then a voice. All blood, of every kind, in some way speaks. It is only the peculiar language of Christ's blood which we would discern, and which some comparisons may perhaps make more clear.

The blood of our kindred speaks to us. Over invisible chords, it vibrates from and into our very heart. We never know, indeed, what eloquence and pathos may come out of these ties of blood, till, from the vibration of their common music, they finally snap. "Blood is blood," says the old proverb, to signify how quick and close we hear this call. When it is but a call of kindly greeting, it wakens in us a strange thrill, like nothing else we can feel. When it is a voice of need and distress, though from the feeblest solitary lips of some separated wanderer on the other side of the globe, it

summons families to the rescue ; or it blows a trumpet, and invites tribes to battle ; and, at the cry of a name on the breeze, or its blazonry on a banner, the earth shakes with the tread of gathering hosts, and human destinies are changed. When it is the dying tone of a faint voice, just heard expiring in agony, it strikes sharp on the sense, and tugs at the heart-strings, as though it would draw out the roots of our own being. Yes,

“ E'en from the tomb, the voice of nature cries.”

See the mother, with her dead child in her arms, or leaning over its coffin in the lonely, noiseless chamber. Note the singular bending and swaying of her form, like nothing else you behold in the world. What heaves irregularly in her lungs, and so agitates her frame with irrepressible and almost unmeasured excitement ?

“ She hears a voice you cannot hear ! ”

the voice of blood, — the voice of her little one, though its lips are now cold and speechless ; the voice of its former infantile wailing, or, more melancholy, of its late gay laughter, coming up mysteriously, though there is no sound or language, through the hush of the room, into the inner, echoing chamber of her heart.

The blood of our fathers has a voice. It cries to us from the ground, where they fell fighting for freedom, and speaks better things than the crime pro-

claimed by the blood of Abel. Like an anthem and chorus of many voices swelling in harmony from the past, it tells of patriotism and heroic surrender of life for their land's welfare and their children's good.

But, beyond the private relations of home or the broader claims of country, the voice of Christ's blood passes through the world, the nobler, everlasting strain of humanity. In his voice that great and universal strain first issued. From his dumb mouth it was heard as loud as from his vocal tongue. He struck the supreme, unparalleled note of the common Father's equal and impartial goodness. He affirmed, in his doctrine, God's long-suffering and readiness to pardon; and the noiseless issue of his blood was its perfect annunciation. Truly it spoke better things than the injuriously spilt and bitterly accusing blood of Abel. It spoke better things than the blood which so warmly and dearly runs in the little channels of kindred. It spoke better things than that blood of race which so often declares itself in pride and war and jealousy. It spoke better things than that blood, now stirred to envy and partisan strife, about the relative rights and places of the two great natural divisions of the human family; for, by his gentleness and his strength, each perfect, Christ himself belonged to both those divisions. It spoke better things than our blood ever speaks; standing still in indifference, curdling in dislike, recoiling with antipathy, and

flowing only in rare currents of generosity and magnanimity; for it is the blood of him who, in every motion of his veins and pulse of his circulation, as well as in the last crimson expiring hour, proved himself the friend and Saviour of man and woman and child through all advancing generations.

"His blood is like ours," shouted the insurgent peasant, as his own blood boiled with the haughty feeling of new-found equality, to see the blood of his monarch stream on the scaffold. Ah! we cannot say that, save in some low and partial sense, of the blood of Christ. His blood was not tempered and mixed like ours. There were in it no elements of heat or brooding spleen, no vanity or levity, no negligent dulness or variable humor. It did not now stagnate and now leap, like our moody blood. Therefore, coursing in his veins or running from them, it had a voice, moving and persuasive, which we but seldom and distantly, in any utterance of ours, approach.

Herein is the significance of the voice of blood, that it is not the voice of our will or politic contrivance, but the voice of what is inmost in us; of our very make, inclining, and character; of sentiments so deep in their spring, or so vital in their assimilation, that they burst out from us in unconscious, spontaneous power. How often, in this voice of our blood, which indicates our real dispositions, can some selfish note be detected! Rising above this, how commonly a domestic or clannish tone is the

highest that mingles in it! Sometimes it may attain to the poet's song, of a feeling beyond narrow, local limits, embracing mother-land and a common extraction.

"Between let ocean roll;
Yet still, from either beach,
The voice of blood shall reach,
More audible than speech:
We are one."

But on the ascending scale, still higher, and with more comprehensive sympathy, the voice of Christ's blood reaches, in its pity, to the Gentile whom his countrymen despised; to the barbarian whom the classic Greek regarded afar off as an outcast; to the slave whose color our niceness shrinks from; to any and all whom sin or misfortune may have made the offscouring of the earth.

We find thus a new method for the improvement and growth of our character, in the idea of our subject; that it is not only by direct moral effort of our own, or by distinct dogmatic instruction of others, that all good principles and desires in us are to be rooted and encouraged; but by that silent and quiet audience of the spirit, in which we listen to the voice of Christ's blood. Other voices are in our ear; but this is without precedent, for grandeur and originality, in the centuries before, and has no equal in dignity and tenderness along all the ages since. Through all the tumult of earthly cries of "Lo, here! or lo, there!" with unequalled sublimity

it calls us to loftier toils and a superior consecration. Amid the confused clamor of our own passions and inclinations, it invites us to a purity they would never enjoin or seek. There is, indeed, in this discord within, a voice of conscience speaking; one fine key-note of all that is good, the glory of our being. But its voice is, how often, a voice of complaint, a cry of pain from its having been wounded, or the repeated order of an indignant and outraged authority; a querulous condemnation of guilt and threat of penalty for its own violated bidding. In its morbid sensitiveness, it is not seldom a doubtful assurance even to those who have striven to be faithful; and to the convicted sinner, a roll of cloudy thunder out of the firmament of the soul. Thank God, that the voice of our conscience is not the only voice from him that we hear; that another voice rises, forbearing and gentle, out of the blood of sprinkling; unambiguously directs to the path of duty; soothes the over-anxious, and guides them to repose, not on the uneasy bed of their own self-judgment, but in the rest of faith in a Saviour's love; while to those morally awakened from their trespasses, whom an offended and opprobrious conscience chases with the torture of a scourge, or stretches on a rack of miserable reflection, it proposes, in penitence and trust, the terms of gospel forgiveness.

Let us listen to this voice of Christ's blood, speaking better things than that of Abel; better things

than we can hear from that which runs or loiters through our own breast, and, whether swift or lazy, has ever some defect in its calmness, or error in its speed. Let us listen to it. It is not only low and soft in its offers of pardon, but waxes into the blast of a trumpet, as it enjoins obligations sublimer than Hebrew or heathen ever recognized. It tells us that greatness is not in ambition, but in self-sacrifice; that courage is not in resentment, but in meekness; and honor, not in pride, but in humility. It avers that Christ's goodness was not, as men have supposed, any politic plan or wilful ostentation, any superficial and short-lived thing, paraded on a stage or exhausted in a scheme, but deep as the vital principle, and incapable of being even surprised into sin. It informs us that our devotion, like his, should be greater in its inarticulateness than in its profession; and proceed farther than any sound of proclamation, as his was like that line of God, which, without language, has gone out through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world. It assures us, that no theologic dogmatism, or sectarian dooming of others, can either express or establish in us his religion; which, if we would accomplish its true design, must be wrought into us, till it speaks from the blood, is eloquent in the eye, distinct in our face, clear in our manners, and resounding in those under-tones from the soul, to which the vocal organs do but give a body.

We thus see, in fine, how great and deep, running

beneath all distinct estimate or conscious action, into our unconscious nature, is the influence of Christ. It is sometimes said to those who greatly exalt the Saviour, that they create the Christ in whom they believe. But, having attended to these messages, coming in the voice of his blood, we can reply that he, in what is best, happiest, and most hopeful in our souls, has rather created us; that his hand has been too much upon our heart, to mould it into a nobler form and fill it with a better spirit, that we should be able to make any vain-glorious measure or complete critical judgment of him, or that any such measure should be sufficient or such a judgment could possibly be just. So may we be created anew in Christ Jesus, till the voice of his blood become, in some humble sense, the voice of our own.

DISCOURSE X.

PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

Matt. xxviii. 20. — AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO
THE END OF THE WORLD.

At the close of his visible career on earth, Christ appointed a meeting with the eleven disciples in a mountain in Galilee. The text is one of those few communications to them there, which would seem to derive a special emphasis from the place and circumstances in which they were made. At this his last appearance to his followers, he declares that, though about to vanish and be thenceforth unseen, he would still be with them even unto the end of the world. Whether by the *world* here we are to understand the outward world, or rather the religious dispensation which he had instituted, matters little; for that dispensation would last as long as the world should last, and even survive any deluge of fire that might destroy it. It is enough, therefore, if Christ were to be with his friends throughout the whole fortunes of his religion. Hardly any question could be more important to the earnestness of our faith, and the life of our

affection, than whether it be a past and distant, or present and active Redeemer in whom we confide. The affirmation of the text may be enough to settle the question; but I propose to offer several views and arguments by which this point may, to our apprehension, be made more clear.

First, the proposition of our text is implied in many passages, and confirmed by the whole authority of Scripture. The intimacy, which, under various striking illustrations, Christ avouches to subsist between him and his disciples; the oneness in himself and in God, which he supplicates not only for those who had personally known him, but for all who should afterward join their company, to compose and carry on their association upon earth; his second and spiritual coming, which he pre-announces for the time when he should be no longer beheld with the eye; his close connection, and almost seeming identity, with that Comforter which he promised to send into the souls of his friends; his abode within them, in company with God himself, which he foretells; and all the warm expressions of conscious and mutual love, as existing between them and him, which are but their responses to his own words, suppose the real, vital presence of Christ in his church.

Yet this supposition rests not on words alone, but on the deeds of his miraculous life and character. His union with his disciples after his disappearance seems not only in harmony with the facts

of his existence, but the proper sequel required to sustain and carry out those facts to their legitimate results. His supernatural manifestation, for the conversion of Saul, only displays a power ever latent in his body among men. Other prophets before him had done particular supernatural things; but he was a supernatural being, peculiarly united to the Fountain of spiritual energy, with all the attributes of the Most High playing freely through him. The relation which the Scriptures intimate he had with God in the beginning, before the world was, is justified by all he did and said in the world. For, with him, equally strong, backward or forward, with pre-existent or posthumous glory, is the natural reference of miracle. On the stage of history he stands apart from all others, in an insulation of majesty and excellence, performing matchless wonders of healing, bringing back to life, and restoring the lost reason of the mind, by which nearly all prior Jewish marvels are, in comparison, outward and gross, shorn of their splendor. Now, it is but one more operation of this miraculous force, which was in him and streamed from him, that he should be present with his faithful followers through all time. It is no harder to believe in this actual presence, than in that record of the past, whose acceptance makes us to be Christians at all. Nay, we can only think of it as a thing simple and easy for such a one as Jesus Christ to be everywhere with those whose life and hope are so bound up in him, that

their main distinction is to be called by his name. To those held by such a bond, outward introduction is but a small and incidental circumstance.

So, again, his presence in his church is most agreeable to the fact itself of his mighty influence. There have been influential men in the world, whose influence has spread over wide tracts of space and considerable periods of time. But there is no other influence, of genius or character, like that of Christ; so high in quality, broad in extent, or with such irresistible demand of continuance. No other life has attracted the same interest to its events; no other mind has concentrated equal regard upon its traits. Considered as an individual by himself, or as the founder of a line and establisher of a kingdom, he, who was begotten of God and without posterity, so far exceeds all other persons, all dynasties and successions of rulers, that human presumption has rarely gone so far as to bring forward any one for his rival. Hundreds of millions of men, foremost in intelligence and power of their race, have not only been learners of his truth, but have counted it their highest aim to live by his law, and their chief joy to ascribe to him their salvation. His church, so far from fading and falling, like the institutions and empires which mortal potentates have set up, only every day widens and strengthens and multiplies in all climes and tongues its triumphs.

Now, does this wonderful being know nothing of

all this? Ignorant is he, insensible and retired far away from these deep and vast effects, with which the very earth is furrowed, and the souls of men renewed? Sitting at the right hand of God above to intercede, is he yet imperceptive of the course and magnitude of his own redeeming work here below? It cannot be. We cannot think it. This would be like denying to him the reward, promised to the meanest of his followers, that, when they rest from their labors, their works shall follow them. His works! They following him! A following grand indeed! It puts history into his train. It makes mankind his procession. In olden time, spoils and captives used to be led after successful generals and great conquerors, for those military exploits, then the principal ground of honor in the eyes of mankind. But what spoils and captives are those that belong to the Son of God? He may, at least, as he asserted, be with his disciples alway, even unto the end of the world. Nor is there aught in his heavenly condition to hinder this earthly attendance and care.

For, moreover, this presence of Christ with his followers is consistent with all rational ideas of the laws of the material and spiritual world. Nothing perhaps but a wrong judgment, under the prejudice of the senses, of these laws, would prevent any one from receiving, with all its consequences, the teaching of the text. We naturally fancy that our senses give us sufficiently accurate and comprehen-

sive notions of the universe which is about us; and, as we do not see heaven, hear any of its sounds, or associate palpably with any of its inhabitants, we think it must be immensely remote, reached only by some inconceivably long journey beyond the stars. But our senses, though adequate guides for purposes of earthly convenience, give us only very faint and imperfect notions of what is real, or even what is near, in the creation of God. We know, by science, that the mightiest agencies, flowing through the atoms of matter, and most capable to rend and revolutionize its masses, are concealed from the senses. We know that the judgments of the senses are, by education, from infancy to manhood, greatly changed, and must be yet far from the complete truth of things. We know that the senses of different creatures give different impressions of nature. How diverse the view of some insects, with their many-sided organs of vision, from the single perception of a bird of prey gazing down out of the sky; and how far any sensuous idea must fall short of the depth and substance of God's works! We know that a lens expands a particle to a sphere, or brings down the globes of the solar system to our eye. But the eye itself is a lens; and what an altered instrument of sight may higher beings have, and may we possess in future stages of our existence! Probably it requires nothing but dropping the veil of the body to reveal to us the city of God, with the form and

glory of the saints in light. Even our departed friends, according to the writer to the Hebrews, may be ministering spirits to us. How much more must communication with this world be the privilege of him who was of a spirit so exalted above mortals; to whom the laws of nature were subject; whose coming and going they never baulked, and cannot now fetter! The dwellers in the spiritual world are doubtless connected with nature in all her beauty, like ourselves; but connected so much more finely, intimately, and widely than we, that we cannot determine their relation to it by our own. But as one person, by his voice and look, is at the same time present through a great company, so more perfectly may it be with them; while Jesus Christ pervades the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth, with his spirit. We sometimes, amid the glories of the outer world, have, in our rapture, glancing conceptions of the possibilities of discernment and joy which our own soul may reach in future stages of our being. These conceptions we can now take as but shadows of what higher existences already possess. But in such a subject we must remember, that, with all our criticism, we have no instruments or faculties to measure Christ himself. Apprehended he may be, but for ever unmeasured by our minds. The man that claims to have compassed his proportions is a surveyor forgetting the length of his chain. We may spiritually see and feel Christ in one place; but we know

not in how many other places he may be. The child sees a rainbow, seeming to set its radiant foot down among a clump of houses, or on the top of a neighboring hill; but, as he goes to find it, it appears to move to another spot; and he learns at last, that, with its manifold brilliance, it fills the heavens and the earth, and is wherever there is an eye to see, or a heart to admire it. So it is with the presence of Christ. To us it is immeasurable. We cannot go back of him, or walk between him and God. We cannot quite draw the boundary line which separates between him and his Father, or between him and his followers. When we can tell precisely whence, in space, comes the song that celebrates his praise, then we may tell precisely where he is. Space is not infinite, as is in the vulgar notion supposed; but spirit is infinite, and includes it.

In fine, the presence of Christ gives real meaning to the ordinance of his Supper. He does not invite us to a feast from which he himself is absent. His Supper is not an act of commemoration merely, but of communion also. Strictly, indeed, we cannot commemorate Jesus, as those disciples did who had a knowledge and recollection of his person; who had seen his face, heard his voice, sat by his side, and gone along with him in his steps. Mere commemoration would have grown more far and faint continually, unsupported by communion; which may last, in its completeness, through every age, and be the same on eastern or western shores.

Here is the true doctrine of the real presence. It is a doctrine not of Christ's body and blood actually in the bread and wine. We do not so want his body and blood. Like his chief apostle, Paul, and all his spiritual followers, we know him not after the flesh. We want his spirit; the conscious, loving, saving spirit of our Lord. Nor let us feel an objection in the unfathomable mystery of such a relation. We are embosomed in mystery. On this globe, — that spins round its axis, and whirls round the sun, and, with the sun, rolls round some grander centre, — our physical state is an insolvable, bewildering mystery. That must be poor and shallow which we can fathom and comprehend. It is the recommendation of our doctrine, that it raises us above the naturalism which some are so fond of for their religion, to feel the working of a supernatural power.

But the doctrine of the text is not one to be built up on our reasonings, though they may show the futility of all objections against it. It is supported by Christ's authority; and, beyond all theoretic speculation, the words of Christ, in the text, bring us to practical conclusions, most precious and moving. By no metaphor, but in sober fact, he is still the Master of the feast, the invisible Head of his table, related to us as truly as we to him. He responds to the affection we cherish. He comes to the earth, not on the trivial errands which some pretended or inferior spirits discharge, but for the

greatest and holiest work on the human soul. He is not unconscious when, with love and devotion, we call his name. He animates the whole society of his friends with his own spiritual power. While alway with his disciples even unto the end of the world, he is ready to welcome them, after death, to the assembly and church of the First-born, and partake of the tokens of communion with them fresh and new in the upper kingdom. What should we infer from his words of blessed promise, but something beyond a doctrine to be believed, even a life to be lived in fellowship with him and with God?

But this idea of Christ's presence would come to us with little intelligibleness or impression, were not even his authority correspondent to spiritual experience of the fact. Nor is the reality of this experience, attested as it is through long ages, over wide spaces, in the consciousness of multitudes of disciples, to be set aside on account of the difficulty of its literal or logical statement. One thing is certain: positive acts, manifold achievements of substantial glory, are on all sides adduced in proof of the strength and wisdom and goodness drawn from a living Redeemer. To a present Lord, whom they commune with, the most heroic and patient of men ascribe the power and purity of their doing and suffering; and while no doubt rests on their honesty or perceptiveness, or on the excellence of their accomplishments, it is hard to see how their testimony can be ruled out. Indeed, in the thing they allege,

there is nothing absurd or intrinsically unacceptable to reason. The existence of a fountain of concealed supply, such as they suppose in the immediate aid of an unseen Saviour, contradicts no law of the human mind. Such a thought may be repelled by the sensual understanding, concerning itself with outward measurement of size and color and material relation. Men, in whom this understanding is prominent, looking out earnestly and keenly on the huge bend of the earth and the boundless waves of the air, may gaze incredulously back, with condescending pity or supercilious scorn, upon the Christian idea. Insuperable banks, gulfs that cannot be passed over, to their view, rise and yawn between the animated observer and the disembodied spirit. But why should any physical, geographical, or astronomical conception have virtue to annihilate or privilege to precede an intuition of the heart? Jesus Christ himself shows the clearness of his own divine sight, in putting the proper and highest vision of man in the heart; and with that pure vision only he himself, as well as God, is seen. As spiritual things are spiritually discerned, so spiritually alone can they be judged. If, in the words of a noble, religious man and poet, we can think it is the ministry of our departed friends

“To lend a moral to the flower,
Breathe wisdom on the wind;
To hold commune at night's lone hour
With the imprisoned mind;”

ly, what we imagine of them we may believe know of the Christ, whose life, heavenly on h, has awakened and sustains whatever is venly and holy in our own souls. This is ething, the witness of which we must have in selves. There is an evidence of Christianity litional to all external or commonly considered rnal evidences, one pillar of the faith left to be structed in the believer's own mind. But, once re constructed, it can by no means be over- own or gainsaid.

DISCOURSE XI.

THE THOUGHT OF CHRIST.

Matt. xxii. 42. — WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

So asks Jesus of the spiritual chiefs of a people long looking out for the Christ, a great deliverer. Near the close of a career, illustrated by words and works, that, with thousandfold demonstration, proved him to be that Christ, these magnates of the church and state, so far from receiving him as such, are meeting and plotting for his overthrow. Weary of their stubborn incredulity, grieving at their wilful opposition, despairing to touch hearts so hard; yet in compassion, which one at all inferior to himself might have mixed with ironic and indignant scorn, for such moral blindness and hopeless stupor, he says, "Well, what is your thought of the Christ, that Redeemer you await? Will you give me the idea on which your present conduct is grounded?" He does not ask, "What do you think of me?" He sets himself personally aside, and with modesty as disinterested as his greatness was sublime, he asks, "What think ye of Christ?"

To seize their exact thought, and bring it to the touchstone of truth, he inquires more particularly, Whose son should that Christ be? They say, David's. But how, then, Jesus proceeds, does inspired David call him Lord? a title no father would have given; and which specially a Jewish father, with his incomparably high notions of paternal dignity, in this case, too, mixed with kingly authority, would never have bestowed on his own son. They are confounded into silence, as Jesus thus convicts them of having a low idea of their own expected Messiah; of having themselves, in their very pride of knowledge, come short of the glorious thought that had gleamed on the mind of their prophets, and shone forth in the poetic genius of their ancestral countrymen; and of putting a false changeling of their conceit in the place of that predicted deliverer. With such power he evolves the reason why they rejected him, and displayed towards him a temper so ungenerous in their hostile deeds; because they were recreant to the hope of their own nation; because the Messiah, foretold by holy seers and anticipated by humble believers, had faded out of their view, and dwindled from a grand manifestation of God into a merely human creature; because thus, in their mean conclusion, he was no mighty spirit, gracious to bless and terrible to purify, but transformed into the pattern of a worldly reformer, of a political adventurer and sectarian leader, to foster their theological prejudices.

and accomplish a haughty tribe's aristocratic and bigoted plans. Jesus was not this. Jesus could not do this. Thus we see the force of his inquiry. Their thought of Christ accounted for their conduct towards the real Messiah, expelling him to make way for a hollow semblance and vain usurper of their imagination. That thought was the source of their disparaging words and evil deeds. That thought obscured his goodness, and eclipsed from their sight the actual glories in the midst of them. In that thought they not only sentenced him, but, still more, pronounced judgment on themselves.

“What think ye of Christ?” The words of Jesus keep long. This question has not lost its original emphasis. The answer to it will still explain our religious character, and furnish a test of our morality. As the artist is said to put some favorite line or hue into his portrait or statue, by which he himself is known in his work, so our painting of another always pencils our own features. Our thought of any person is always a sure criticism on ourselves. The unfair thought marks our littleness; stigmatizes our narrowness; in a brand of shame on our foreheads, publishes our iniquity; and, as with the Pharisees, is the mother and nurse of all wrong dispositions,—of anger, in the ancient proverb, kicking against the pricks; and of envy, in the modern one, biting a file. It gives birth to every wicked desire that wounds and curses our own nature; as a profane man, in the bursting plenti-

fulness of his blasphemy, swears at himself, the object of his own fury ; or, as it is told, the scorpion stings itself to death with its own poison.

Our thought is the thing all-important. What, then, do we think of Christ? Our thought of him is of great moment to our own welfare. How different with the Pharisees, if, honestly treating their sacred books and dealing truly with their own minds, they had nourished, not a perverse, but a right thought! How they would have welcomed Jesus as fulfilling all that Moses saw, and David sang, and Isaiah prophesied! His blood, that was on them, flowed only from their iniquitous thought. Our thought of Jesus, in our diverse circumstances, will no less, for weal or woe, affect our character and deportment. If we think of him as no display of divinity, but a piece of human nature simply, an elder brother in Joseph's and Mary's family, an extraordinary man, with a curious biography, singular fate, unparalleled and unaccountable repute ; if his story is to us only a marvellous picture of the past, perhaps beautiful to gaze at, but too remote for an immediate relation ; if the splendors of his power to our sight roll on a distant track, as on the highway a stranger's equipage rides coldly shining by ; if his person be to us nothing more than a likeness among saints and heroes hanging on the walls of history or in the chambers of memory, — then, in any or all these ways, we fall below the just thought of Christ in his asserted divine lordship. Then, too, the con-

sequences of this erroneous fundamental thought, like the vast and endless mistakes from an ill-measured base-line, will show themselves, as with the Pharisees, in the sin and wandering of all our life.

Our disparagement of Jesus is the poorest compliment to ourselves. It injures our own mind, and is a glaring betrayal of ignorance of our own need. One thing is true to all that is profoundest in human experience, that, in our weakness and sorrow and sin, we want no mere man to save us. The soul cannot put up with such ineffectual succor. The case is too serious for human help. When deeply conscious of our necessity, we know that no earthly remedy will suffice. That heart within us, which crieth out for the living God, and yet so feebly of itself can attain to him, wants and can do with nothing less than the Son of God, the Father's own manifestation, for its Saviour. Guilty, grieved, liable to suffering and death, we crave a revealed omniscient care. We wistfully long after some provision equal to our peril, and are satisfied only when we hear those old words of superhuman significance ring in our ears, "The Lord said unto my Lord."

I mean not, thus saying, to transgress the lines of theological charity. Whatever peculiar view we may have of Christ's mysterious nature, be our speculation or metaphysic analysis that of one sect or another, to be practically our Redeemer he must be regarded as either essentially divine, or superna-

turally clothed with Divinity; and such a judgment is no dogmatic interference with the right of thought or liberty of opinion. It is the simple requisition of reason. So high is the outcry of our very nature. None but a messenger from Heaven can soothe the pangs of earth. Our Pharisaic refusal to put ourselves into the hands of the divine Messiah, — our idea that we need nobody to attend to us, but one like ourselves, and so will let the matter run, — is like the sick man's stoutly protesting that there is no occasion for a physician. He is very well, or will be very well! He will trust to nature for assistance! Meantime, in his dangerous, critical state, he feverishly consumes, or feebly wastes his life and strength away.

Brethren, we are not very well. We know we are not. Multitudes of us are sorely diseased, past all healing of this world. Many hearts now here, laid open, would show, as verily they themselves understand, wounds that must be medicined by some balm in Gilead, having a quality to cure beyond all the specifics for mortal maladies. Man is not enough for himself. Man is not enough for man. None can redeem his brother. Our souls, infected with the complaints of sin, so long epidemic on this earth, our bosoms pierced and scarred from many a thrust and stab of excited passions, demand the restoring touch of him who can make the soul, as he did the body, sound. Examine yourself, and decide what your condition requires ;

if it be what some wise fellow-creature, some famous philosopher, some ancient lauded sage, can supply; or only an Almighty power, assuring itself to you by coming incarnate to walk these fields of time, and leave behind for ever in this lower air a spirit of communion, to flow with recovery and god-like strength into every welcoming breast. Feeble, unworthy creatures are we before God. Yet have we such nobility in our need, that Emmanuel, God with us, alone can meet our case. Such is our native greatness, and such our miserable failure, that so much we require; and so much our Maker has vouchsafed for our rescue. This is the reading of the text, that only by such a thought of Christ can we be saved. I enter not into the disputes, the nice verbal, and often barren discriminations of sects, nor care for the controversies of rival conflicting churches. I would look only to the length and breadth of the New Testament teaching.

Do any say, "Without such lordly intervention of a Mediator, we will go at once and entirely to God himself for aid"? But whence springs our thought of God, or what is most near, tender, and consoling in it, but from this thought of the real and living Christ? To whom but Christ is it owing that the thought of God in the human mind is no longer that of a cold, far-off Creator of the world, or of a manifold diffused Spirit of the universe; in the heathen superstition, contradicting himself amid the phenomena of his works; or, like some forms

of animated existence, parting from his unity into countless individuals, and finding many potent and invincible adversaries to his perfect sway ; but the thought of one great, benignant, caring Father, ever watching over us, providentially numbering the hairs of our heads, sending alleviation to our worst distresses, and offering for our salvation his own grace. Herein is Christ's worth, that beyond aught beside, and as no other can, he brings God home to the human soul.

Is not this a benefit beyond all comparing? Who that is not blind, gazing within, has not had revealed to him a void, which nature, with her vast beauty, cannot fill ; nor friendship, with her assiduity, cover ; nor pleasure, with its vanity, hide ; nor business, with its anxiety, satisfy ; yet which, unsupplied, casts a dreadful shade over the face, and wretchedness into the fortunes, of man ; but which, from the gospel we learn, is not mockingly but mercifully made so large and insatiable, because the Father and the Son, those grander occupants, desire it for their dwelling? The residence is fit for its inmate. The temple is reared for its deity, though, without that deity, it is left a horrid chasm. What, then, shall we think of Christ, but that he is indeed the Messiah, come to introduce the Infinite One to his proper abode? If, like the old Pharisees, or any of their modern representatives, we think of him as one who is going to promote our selfish interests, to elevate our worldly position, to be head of our

denominational party, or servant of our ecclesiastical schemes, — then we let him down from that station of universal Master and spiritual Inspirer, wherein alone is his efficient aid.

What do we think of him? How many think of him, not so much incorrectly, as hardly at all! How many think abundantly of other things and other persons, but very little of him who, of all themes, furnishes the most noble for their reflection! In the very seat of his honor, how many minds are busied about somewhat else, and stray from his service! And when the tedious affair of worship in his name, that should stir the roots of our being, is over, — oh! then the great world again, with all its myriad spectacles, revolves full in their eye, shutting him out altogether, leaving no controlling idea of his goodness and purity to guide through its scenes, or guard against its temptations. Is our thought of him earnest and continuous, or volatile among the endless variety of outward objects, each, in its turn and for its little moment, coming to absorb us? Do we think of him? If not, what business have we in his courts? Our presence is insolence. Lo, he died for us, and in return only asks of us a thought; and that not for his sake, but our own. No fanatical heat does he ask, no hermitic recluseness, no ostentatious raptures, as of devotees; least of all, that forced and wilful, though not designedly insincere, affectation of peculiar love for him, which can only move disgust, but the calm

and just, yet heart-regenerating and life-reforming thought.

He does not forbid we should have other subjects of thought, that he may monopolize our meditations. Of many and various matters, in their time and proportion, with his smile and blessing, may we think. But he asks that we should not postpone and subordinate the great thought of him to inferior ones, to the glitter of society, the gratification of appetite, and the amusement of to-morrow. For thus we do him not justice. Nay, it were of little moment to him, the meek and lowly among men, and of God glorified. We do not justice to our own souls. We practise an absurdity and insanity in making the first last, being oblivious of what we should mostly remember, and preferring trifles to treasure; as the idiot or stupid savage grasps at a gaudy toy or glass bead, as, for its sparkle, more precious than silver and gold.

What do we think of Christ? This thought of him cannot be secondary. He must be Prince of nothing. On the throne only, and not in the meanest chair in the soul's chambers, can he sit, though he wished no place of honor in the world. Among the flowing multitude of our thoughts, as the waves of the sea, what should swell upon us to his unearthly beauty? On the wide field of our contemplation, what should stand like the mountain to his exalted excellence? What title, in the morning, hath the sun to rise upon our waking, with a

majesty to vie with his returning spirit? When should the stars of evening come out on their own account alone, and not as the emblem of his celestial sanctity? As the light shines clearly, should it not be the type of his truth; and the air, quiet at noontide or midnight, signify his peace; and all the fresh springing of the year revive, in the fruit we bring forth, his eternal promises?

But, if our thought of him be superficial and transitory, in vain, in dedicated places and hours, the show of our regard. Apathy will be in the brows that bend at his shrine, and hypocrisy in the tongues that sound forth his praise. Sunday will be a waste, the church a pretence, every sacred ordinance an affront, consecrated temple and echoing tower but empty pomp and a tinkling cymbal, without the uplifting thought of him. The withholding of our heart in our small, penurious, earthly thought, will be a stamp of falsehood, as clear as that old, so fearfully-punished keeping back of part of the price that belonged to his service.

Verily, what we think of Christ is the question of questions. The lofty burning thought of him alone can give the dignity of any meaning to a Christian assembly. No incorporation by human authority, no customary gathering, no pleasant neighborly salutation, can bring men together truly qualified for any act of devotion. Only the revering thought of Christ in every breast can bind all in one body, and that his body. This will link us

in bonds that cannot be broken. This will turn our faces towards him in a circle and ring of eternal harmony, of which his attracting love shall be the forming centre. It shall be marred by no reluctant will, weakened by no vagrant attention, but complete with the melodies of many worshippers, in a concord whose score and measure our spirits will compose. Without such unison, no outward strength and prosperity can warm into any heariness our association.

What do we think of Christ? It will be a happy day when we can say,— We think he is God's Anointed and the world's Messiah. We think he is all of which Hebrew foresight had glimpses, and at which Pagan genius guessed. We set him in no outer Gentile court, but give him the room he deserves in our Holy of Holies. We think of him not for the instant of a light and fugitive regard, with a rare and cursory intellectual glance; but we stand entranced in thought before this master-work of heaven-created loveliness and purity, till we are changed into the same glory. We think of him, till, as we trust, even into our poor estate something of his wisdom and righteousness passes over. We think of him, till, like the beauty of the world copied in the very rays that reveal it, his image is transferred to the heart's tables for our likeness.

DISCOURSE XII.

LOVE FOR CHRIST.

Eph. xiii. 19. — THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

You will observe, in the terms used, that this is part of a prayer; and Paul closes the Epistle with a benediction, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!" We have here evidence that love to Christ was understood by the apostles and early Christians to be not only a feeling exercised towards him while he was a companion of men on earth, but an essential and permanent part of his religion. For it was enjoined after generations had passed away, upon those who had never seen Jesus in the flesh. Nay, Paul himself, the author of our text, had never seen him in the flesh, but only in some miraculous or inspired manner.

But how can we love a being whom we never saw, and with whom we have had in the world no actual intercourse? I think it may be made to appear, that personal intercourse or sensible acquaintance is not the only or chief way in which

a sincere love may be awakened in our hearts. We have had no personal intercourse or sensible acquaintance with God. He is for ever a veiled being. We have never met him on the right hand or the left. Every living man, like Job, sees him not, before or behind, above or below. The universe, if his manifestation, is also his hiding-place; and on every side his presence stretches away into an engulfing infinity, in which our very thought is swallowed up and lost. Yet we are commanded to love him supremely, with heart and soul, with mind and strength, more than we love any human being. So far as we are truly religious, we do thus love him. But how can we do so? By means of the impressions which are made on us by his disposition and character. What we purely love in any case, indeed, is no quality of outward appearance, but an inward excellence and moral goodness, which, being perfect in God, claim for him our perfect love. So may we love Christ, because his spirit of truth and purity, his heart of tenderness and devotion, is revealed to us. Love for him is higher than common, earthly affection, but violates no law of the human heart. True love will never depend on bodily presence. It grows in absence; it lives on invisibleness; it lights a mortal shape into immortal beauty; it strikes its roots, not in our senses, but in our meditations; on gracious images it thrives, and circles round holy ideas; — and, if it have not this angels' food of imagination and finer breath of sentiment,

oh, how it fades and sinks amid the low circumstances and petty details of the world!

I love Fenelon, whom I never saw, and even the particular circumstances of whose life exist quite dimly in my recollection. It is the temper of the man, more than the events of his earthly career, that lays the generous spell on all my faculties. As I read his saintly pages, and am let into the recesses of his lowly and gentle soul, I feel drawn to him with stronger cords than I might be to one whom I should meet every day in the street, and closely converse with about daily transactions of mutual concern. I call to mind a great and good man, with whom I was intimate; less, however, as I now remember, by the strength of any personal tie, by any outward approach or free familiarity, than by a friendship and brotherhood of the mind, in which I revered and loved him, which absence did not diminish, and which still remains, though what of him was mortal is long since but wasting ashes. Very unfortunate must they have been who have had in their fellowships no such experience. Indeed, if we examine our feelings, I suspect we shall find that our strongest love is never a merely fondling and caressing regard, fixing on or excited by the outward presence of its object, and passing round that object to come cunningly back to ourselves; but that it partakes largely of a solemn respect for the object, lifts it up into a certain venerableness when near, and has an eye to discern it, however far.

So it is not the accident of being coteremporary with Christ that drew affection to him, but the mind that was in him, and flowed from him, whose streaming brightness the lapse of ages cannot lessen or dim. In fact, the highest love was not felt towards Christ during his earthly existence, but after he had gone. Even his own followers were not able fully to appreciate his divine worth while he lived. He was with them, but they knew him not. He came unto his own, but they received him only partially. His light shone in darkness, and was not comprehended by it. But when their heavenly companion had vanished, and they turned to look on the path they had travelled with him, then they saw his glory. Every incident started up from the wayside into new interest. Every word he had spoken was to them verity, every suggestion duty, every action love. His whole existence became a mount of transfiguration to the minds whose very perceptions of spiritual loveliness and beauty he had first to educate; and, as on the road to Emmaus, at the end of the journey their eyes were opened, and they knew him,—knew and loved him. How could they know but to love? Yes, they that forsook him and fled at the time of his betrayal followed him, even unto bloody martyrdom, when he no longer existed as a visible leader for them to follow, but only as a disembodied, translated, and immortal spirit.

How came it that his absence called out their

affection even more than his presence ? It was by fastening their attention on what they had before but half observed,—his intrinsic greatness. It was by assembling into one picture, so that they could see it in its unity and wholeness, the proofs of his disinterested goodness. It was by disclosing the divine meaning of instructions, which, at the time, had fallen faintly on their ear. It was by laying open the grandeur of a self-sacrifice, which had never been written down in the annals of time, or dawned on their own conceptions. He told them it was expedient for them that he should go away ; but, having retired in the flesh, he came back as a spirit. So was he nearer than ever, and mightier,—yea, nearer in heaven than in Jerusalem or Galilee. So he laid a more constraining, though ever gentle hand on their hearts, and was, in some sense, the Comforter he sent.

Now, all these grounds of love to an 'unseen Redeemer exist substantially to us as much as to them. We, therefore, may have as earnest and revering an attachment to Jesus as they had. Accordingly, Peter, writing his general Epistle to the believing strangers scattered throughout all Asia, and discoursing to them of Christ, says,—“ Whom having not seen, ye love.” Ah ! fond, once fickle, but now firm apostle, well mightest thou say that. For thou thyself lovedst thy Master better when thou couldst no longer see him, than thou hadst always done when at his side. Thou didst

deny him in the body, but never, oh ! never, after that sacred form had been laid in the tomb. Thou didst flee from his fate in the judgment-hall ; but, when the cross had been his portion, thou pursuedst hard after him, till the same cross was thine own.

Why should not the converts in Pontus and Galatia, to whom Peter told all that he himself knew of the Saviour of the world, love him as Peter did ? — seeing that the excellences of his character had no transitory relation to external accident, and no confined regard to any one time or place ; but were the vital, universal elements of all goodness, to awaken a throb in the human breast in every clime and through every age. Why should not we love him with sensibility as ardent as Peter's, and as overflowing as Paul's, since he is to us as well as to them the model of perfectness and the means of salvation ? That we never saw him, and that no painter has ever satisfied us with the likeness, which through a longing imagination we seek, avails not to take away aught of those holy and desirable attributes, which suffer nothing from the decay of mortality and the damps of the grave, but rather gleam with new splendor out of the valley and shadow of death, and are enshrined amid spear and rod, and thorns and hammer of the trampling host upon Calvary.

Not love without seeing ! Have we, then, always

loved our own friends and kindred best, and most worthily, while sojourning with them upon the earth? Or has not our burning grief at their departure brought out secret lines in their characters, whose latent lustre we never saw in the mild, disguising light of domestic prosperity? "Surely," said Jacob, as he awoke from his dream, "the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." Surely, angels have been our fellow-travellers, and we knew not how to entertain them till they were gone. And Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, came into the world, and found no one to understand him, till his pilgrimage was over; and the number of those that have loved him has been determined by no nearness to the time of his coming, but, by distance itself, has been multiplied through every age that has rolled away. The call to love him, even with the swelling note of the gospel-trumpet, athwart the nations and down the track of time, has been ever waxing louder. If we love him not with unswerving loyalty, we are less excusable than the fishermen he called from their nets, and the publicans who first sat at his table; for they knew but partially the claims, which, verified and increased through every generation, we can no longer conceal or dispute.

I have not presented these claims of Christ to our love, in connection with the peculiar doctrines of any sect, respecting his nature; for I do not conceive that they are greatly implicated in deno-

minational controversies. Believe that Christ is the second person in the Godhead; believe that he existed before the foundation of the world; believe that he is a highly exalted and divinely commissioned man,—and no one of these suppositions can essentially abate or enhance the beauty and loveliness of his character. That character is the sum of all spiritual excellence, however gained; whether by direct emanation from the Deity, or voluntary obedience to the divine will on earth, or by archangelic culture before the morning stars sang together.

Volunteer polemics! in a battle to which the Prince of peace has blown no summons, cease your strife. The meek and lowly Son of God, is not magnified, and cannot be shorn of his honor, by any of your conflicting theories. The splendor round his head is enough to shine through even your erroneous interpretations. Nothing can utterly hide from you the halo of his virtue, but your own sin. Your selfish and angry passions may, to your sight, like an earth-born exhalation steaming up against the day, bedim his glorious features, and cast into cloudy eclipse the Sun of Righteousness. You may hotly maintain him to be very God, and put him to an open shame. You may sharply refuse to see in him any thing more than the son of Mary, yet have no touch of his humane and humble spirit. You may eagerly contend that he had glory with the Father literally before the world was; yet, from the

profound eternity in which it shone, not a ray of it penetrate into your own breast.

But behold him as he is and walks in the gospel; mark his calmness amid persecution; consider his silence to hostile accusation; behold his compassionate bending over the bed of sickness and the bier of death; see him kneel in the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and himself drink the cup which he by prayer and power removed from other lips; and then survey that last funeral procession, in which he first stooped to bear the cross of wicked judgment on which he was afterwards to be stretched; and, oh! you must love him. All, of every name, must love him alike, with the very same, the only possible spiritual love with which God has fashioned or ever enables the human heart to beat. For what particular in the wonderful scene, from his manger on to his sepulchre, is varied by a jot or tittle with your varying opinions and contradictory schemes? What opinions or schemes could have the gigantic and infinite force required for such an alteration? What feature, from that great moral creation of his existence, can you erase by your speculations, any more than you could the globe-girdling chains of the everlasting hills? Or what element of perfection can you, in the search of a transcendent fancy, find, that is not already embodied in that figure, the noblest that ever stood on earth, and reflected the light of heaven?

This one thing of the love of Christ let us rescue

from the wretched arena of human strife. It can with no propriety be put on the mean level of our contending passions. There is nothing in it that properly belongs to theology or to party. There is nothing in it that suffers any confinement. Whatever is wise or mighty in this world can discern nothing in it weak or unworthy. It is for us all, manly and womanly, to give him the heart of affection in the breast, not with any of the tumult or uneasiness that disturbs and distracts earthly passion, but with the tranquil fervor, with the growing ardor, with the immovable devotion, which so lofty an object, so fixed a constellation of moral brightness, deserves. Nay, it is the great honor of human nature that it can feel such love; nor is there a better test of the real nobleness of any mind, than the degree of affection it may entertain for a character so shining and spotless, showing so conspicuously whatever trait of excellence any one may especially delight in; as, we are told, the Indian boy, on hearing the missionary's story, burst into admiration of Christ's unparalleled courage, which, as the only virtue he had seen conspicuously displayed, constituted almost his whole scale of morality.

Peculiar advantage indeed do we have for such love; for, moreover, perhaps no other character which has ever been portrayed, or has been in our experience, makes such a unity of impression. Certainly neither from our own confused, unsettled character, nor from that of those we walk with, can

we gain any such stamp of unclouded and unshifting clearness. Through and overcoming all the discrepancies, so often mentioned, in the manner of stating particular facts in the New Testament, the character of Christ is the consistent and uniting principle of the whole narrative. So long as that remains, by no strength of all the skeptical hands in the world can the story be rent asunder. It is the harmony of the Gospels. It is a harmony that should attune our hearts.

You admire the great discoverer who has detected a law, or illustrated a kingdom of nature, or revealed a new material world in the heavens; and some appear to love splendor of intellect and genius more than they do the most genial traits of character. But Christ, chief in reason as well as to the heart, has brought to light the world of spirits, and disclosed the laws of the kingdom of God. You weep at the delineations of fiction. But his finer qualities, which no fiction can come up to or more than remind us of, were lived out through the roughest reality. You are borne away by some noble sentiment, which poetry has expressed, or music awakened, or art engraved, or mortal lips have dropped. But the nobler sentiment that was kindled on that brow, that beamed forth from that eye, and flowed in those words of him who spake as never man spake, — can it ephemerally pass and leave you unmoved? Go, then, to his life once more. Follow him through Samaria and Judea.

With him thread the city, sail the sea, pierce the wilderness, climb the mountain, watch in the garden, and stand, with his mother and the disciple whom he loved, before the cross; and in his companionship you will love him, and your love of him will be the power of salvation to your own souls. For well did he himself say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." This is the evidence, this will be the effect, of love.

Thank God, then, for something to love; something that wore our garments, and shed our tears, and started with our sweat, and bowed with our anguish. Thank God for something to love, on which we can pour out and expend the very treasure and fulness of our affection, as it can rarely, if ever possibly, flow to aught we see in the world; but on this can flow the more as it is purer, can be made pure and blessed by the object on which it flows, and by that object created in many a cold, stony heart where before it did not exist. Thank God, we can open the door for one to come in over the threshold, better and dearer than any, though fond and preciously clasped to our bosom, whom the roof covers; one who supplies what the hungry heart in us craves, and stanches the wounds of affection with which the torn or broken heart bleeds. Thank God—let us sinners thank him—for one who was sinless, though he refused to be called good; who is willing to accept our love, and to return it with his own; nay, who first loved us, that

we might have the privilege of loving him. Oh! let us know that love of Christ, of which the apostle wrote, and which, in the beautiful ambiguity and doubleness of the text, is both his love to us and our love to him. Let him teach us humility and penitence. Let him inspire us with peace and holy joy. Let him give us the water which shall be in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Then not in vain shall we meet to worship in his name. Not in vain shall we thus meet, did I say? How poor and weak the words! Not in vain shall we live this mortal life. For this love of Christ shall ennoble our life while we live, and make it immortal when we die.

For, in fine, pure love in the soul, more than any other energy of our nature, works this conviction of immortality. No intellectual exercise, no study or admiration of nature, no activity of imagination or labor of art, puts forth so earnest a demand to endure. The appeal with which affection calls on eternity for its only date, and on the other world for the sphere of its advancing fulfilment, is but true to its own indissoluble nature, and to the promise involved in all its own sincerity and holiness. Especially the love of God, of perfect sanctity and goodness, is content with no limitation; and therefore, with great beauty and self-evident truth, the Scripture repeatedly assures unbounded, eternal life to the spirit that experiences this sublimest emotion. But this love of God is derived peculiarly from

Christ. The love he awakens in us for himself leads on to the love of the Father he manifests. He comes between, not to intercept or eclipse, but to transmit, the divine goodness and glory. Our love for the Son interferes not with our supreme regard for the parent Deity, any more than our love for one of our kindred shuts out that for another. This is the glory of all true affections, that, amid all the other collisions of this harsh and angry world, they never clash, but encourage and protect each other.

Jesus Christ, by drawing so great and wonderful regard to himself, is the educator of all the right affections of the human race. The great and noble love for him calls forth and sanctifies all love. So he refines and raises humanity to the hope of heaven. He awakens, and feeds from his own bosom, the faculties which make the everlasting existence. His own spiritual influence, from his self-sacrificing temper in all action and suffering, more than any literal statement or line of actual prophecy, convinces us of a future state. A revelation of immortality, a simple authoritative saying that we should live again, would not so persuade us into the faith and consciousness of being immortal, as does this display to us and excitement in us of undying love. This opens the gates of paradise, causes the celestial light to shine in our hearts, illumines the written word with the lustre from above, in which we can read it, and discloses the foundations of the New

Jerusalem as the immovable basis on which all present life and action should be built. There are feelings, called by the name of love, which are as transitory as the perishable good which they seek. But that which deserves the title is equally abiding in its own nature, and in the object by which it holds. It does not waver, but has an enduring depth and calm; nor can any thing wrest from it the conviction, that, to give opportunity for its suitable exercise, there must be life for ever.

DISCOURSE XIII.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

1 Cor. x. 16. — THE CUP OF BLESSING WHICH WE BLESS, IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? THE BREAD WHICH WE BREAK, IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST?

THERE is a question of somewhat transcendent quality, yet of very practical importance, never brought to any uniform settlement, rarely opened for express discussion; but, according as one or another decision of it is taken for granted, latently determining all differences among Christians, — What, in relation to its object in this world, is the vital principle of Christianity? Does it touch the individual or common nature; fall within each one's own independent centre of gravity, or press upon the relationship of men; and insulate the conscience for self-culture, or connect human hearts in communion?

I know not that there is any reply to this question but that it does both these things. Certainly, no other religion so thrills the soul with a sense of its immediate relation and solitary responsibility to God, — of its separate dependence on him in

life, and loneliness in death. Yet no religion so links one soul of man with another, and so presents the common Maker and Father as the bond of human beings. Fellowship, communion, oneness in God and Christ, seem to be chosen, favorite expressions in Scripture. One day of worship in every month is called Communion Sunday. If Christianity parts us for self-examination, it binds us in sympathy; if it dissolves the congregation into its component portions, and sends everybody away by himself, it re-assembles us in unity of faith and worship; and, if it levels its searching question at the rectitude and uprightness or obliquity of every creature, it would softly gather all, even as a hen doth her chickens under her wings, together in love.

But, Christianity being thus at once moral and spiritual, still the inquiry is, — What is its first essence and main action, parent and end of all else in its working, — the chief feature, or rather organizing power, that brings all its traits into life and harmony? I propose not trying to answer this question in the formidable way of any speculative or metaphysical pretension; but would, in its disposition, willingly accept as final the Christian consciousness of the votaries and friends of the religion; for, if they do not understand it, no philosophy or reform can make it clear. Without submitting to any ecclesiastically presentable authority as infallible or obligatory, I yet yield to the

common sense and experience of the living church, always co-ordinate with the instruction of the written word; and this double teaching pronounces that communion is the aim and power of the gospel; or if, as is often said, it appeals to the pure individuality of man, it is primarily to that part or exercise of his individuality which respects not his own welfare or improvement, but the prosperity and salvation of his kind. So means the word Catholic, to whatever degree, as the name of a sect sundered from the actual Protestant world, it may be a misnomer. Such, too, the purport, however dimly perceived or blindly pursued, in that whole symbolic service of our religion, the discussion of which agitates and divides the body of Christ from Rome to England and America.

But here the question rises, — What is this principle of communion? The communion is commonly spoken of as something upon a table, consisting in certain elements distributed to persons met under special conditions to receive them. All these are evidently, however, not the communion, but only the form of the communion. The communion is not a material, but an invisible thing of the soul. The board and the supper, the bread and wine, nay, the body and blood, — the dispute about whose real presence has involved so much theological hate, — are all but emblems of the spirit in which Christ lived and suffered. Valuable emblems surely. If tokens and signals are valuable

anywhere or for any thing; if we will not strip life of all its beautiful symbols and affectionate associations; if we will not tear off from our persons, and cut down from our walls, and empty out of our secret cabinets, and clear away from the very motions of our hands and lips, every thing that has this expressive and associated value, and is precious to us but for what it stands for, — which, so long as we are not pure spirit, but spirit in body, with a beating pulse wrought upon from without as well as within, we never can do; — then these tokens, chief and head of all in the dignity and pathos and promise they intend, deserve our respect and solemn celebration.

But still comes back the question, What do they intend? For when Christians are so absorbed in the external signs as to forget the thing signified, and look on the visible ordinance as the source of benefit, instead of its indication; and think there is a magical virtue in its manual administration or their bodily attendance; then come in superstition and idolatry, exaggerated and foolish reverence for the mere shape and ritual of worship, languor of the religious sentiment, an outside more than an inward piety, and a moral life like that vitality in some lower species of the animal creation, which is transferred from the centre, where there is no heart, to the surface and to the most living portion in them of the skin.

What, then, is the intrinsic communion itself?

It is being brought out of our individual interests and separations, and bound together by the holy and loving power we all acknowledge. Communion, so understood, is indeed the essence of Christianity; not a theory, but a life; not a creed brought from the letter of Scripture by the dexterity of our logic and held by the strength of our partisan will, but an inspiration of our hearts; not Christianity by us distinguished, but, what is a very different thing, Christianity distinguishing itself to us, writing itself on our mind, and forming itself in our soul. This communion is the fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer for his disciples, that they all might be one in him and his Father. It is the consciousness that we, who live and breathe in these several frames, are not mutually exclusive beings, but with a common care for the welfare of each other, and of our neighbor, and of our fellow-man. This reality of communion we refer to Christ, because he first brought it in its fine and perfect pattern, as an historic verity, upon earth. He established it among men, and made his church by it. So, after him, the Christian is a communicant. He does not shut up any thing good in his own hand or his own bosom, but extends and diffuses it for a general blessing. Whatever he has he shares. The more precious it is, the more free and anxious he is to share it. That, from his Lord, is his temper, the mark and characteristic by which he is known. Without that, our so-called commu-

nion is but a form, a pretence, and a name ; either a cant we are unaware of, or a base hypocrisy.

Thus, too, it is very easy, by the same rule, to say who is not a Christian. He is one that does not communicate ; who takes not communion, but competition, for his spirit and law. He seeks his own, not another's. He is intent on making his own way, carving his own fortune, procuring wealth or honor or power for himself ; all which he may call by the deceptive, sanctifying phrase of taking charge of his own affairs and minding his own business, when God made every man's true business to go beyond private subsistence and emolument, and cause him to feel ever pressing on his heart the gracious tie of fellowship with his kind. He who desires only or mainly to promote his own prosperity ; who sunders himself from the general good ; who recks not whether men or nations groan so his own cup is filled, or who is enslaved if he be free ; but rushes on to the pleasure or gold he would grasp, practically in the old diabolic proverb, saying, "Each one for himself, and ruin seize the hindmost," — he is not the Christian. This is that spirit of antichrist whose leaven works largely, even in our modern civilization and society, and even a little of which, let into our breast, will fill us with the ferment of pharisaic pride and hate.

But this communion does not break down the sacred distinctions of men. To commune is not

to be confounded together. We are individuals, each with a distinct nature, and free, accountable will. But the peculiarity is, that in Christ we are individuals pledged to each other, and to the race we are part of, and have a common nature with; being "members one of another." This is the communion. This is what its shining vessels all round the globe shadow, and its one though divided loaf declares. All their visible manifestation is nothing but a language to tell what Christianity is, and to say that the cold, uncommunicative solitary is not a Christian, but a heathen; not a Christian, though he eat the show-bread and drink the wine, and pass current in all the commerce of respectability, and call himself by all excellent names, and cover himself with every good badge and profession as a coat of many colors.

A majestic principle, indeed, then, is the communion. There is some grandeur in any way of living for others, and consecration to common ends. The very meanest type of such an existence is nobler than the highest and most ostentatious one of self-seeking. The old Roman, when he felt he was part of Rome, freely to fight and bleed for her, as if his arms and veins were her own; the wild Northman jealous for his clan; the poor Western Indian, or Southern savage-islander, exposing himself and dying cheerfully for his tribe, has a touch of sublimity about him absolutely glorious in comparison with the close temper of a man, in our modern

Christendom, all taken up with hugging his gains or nursing his reputation, heedless of others' success and forgetful of the common weal; while all the time Christianity thunders in his ears her meaning, that we are not our own but public property, belonging to others in public spirit and love. Oh, that heavenly love, which Jesus fetched with him, like a lamp or coal, the first fire of quality more than Promethean, to light and kindle the world, alone makes our life worthy and great! No simply individual thought or endeavor is so lofty. No morality or righteousness of our own, however indispensable, can constitute us Christ's followers or God's elect, lacking that celestial flame. Without it, no scrupulous correctness, careful justice, or proud honesty, will save us. No fastidious self-examination, no keen watchfulness against pollution, no rigid conscientiousness, may suffice even to purify us like this live coal from the altar. The baptism of water is cleansing, but that of fire more so, burning off uncleanness from the heart, as the stained and cankered metal, which no flood could wash, brightens and is burnished in the white heat. This is the baptism which John, while he poured the Jordan on the heads of his followers, prophesied that one coming after him would administer. This, and no merely material process, is the communion of Christ's body and blood.

In such communion there is power beyond the desultory efforts of individual men. As electric

jars, touched one after another, yield each but a faint flash, but, combined, pour out a sparkling stream, before which flint melts and flows; so the exertions which, disunited and scattered, make but a feeble display of little execution, when blended in the loving church of Christ, reduce what is most refractory in the world. Moreover, in such communion alone is there any beauty. When we look out upon the bright evening sky, it is not some strange shooting star, appearing madly to leave its sphere and traverse the firmament on its own account, that attracts our admiration, though it may allure a moment's wandering gaze; but it is the moving harmony of the mutually-related orbs of heaven, set in the upper vault to be a figure of that Christian fellowship which bears the moral world on to bright and happy issues. Such is the idea, in our familiar benediction, of the communion of the Holy Spirit. Such is the gift and singular influence, for a universal blessing, of Jesus Christ.

How affecting the permanency and inexhaustible supply of his redeeming power! Nothing so spreads, nothing so lasts, as the religious feeling he, above all others especially, awakens. Lately, in a neighboring State, forsaking the din of the street, and the sight of flapping sails by the shore, to roam over an unfenced barren ground in an unfrequented wood, far from the habitations of men, I stumbled in a thicket upon one of its countless proofs. It was a grave, with a stone planted in the sand mid the

thin and scanty grass. The inscription, as I stooped to peruse it, showed an antiquity running back towards the first settlement of the country. Time had almost worn away the letters; and the yellow moss, hardened by years, grew toughly over the marble. But, gazing long to spell out the name and date, I descried, in the circular top of the low, leaning monument, a rudely carved head of the Saviour, having a circumference in the likeness of the sun, with rays shooting out as if to illumine the world. Verily, a true emblem. The truth of centuries ago, strong when the first civilizer and Christianizer paddled his canoe across the adjacent stream, was still fresh to the soul in that little mould. The beams, dimly sculptured in the gray rock, shone with a lustre beyond those of the orb of day. The short halo of a handbreadth seemed to run and radiate over all the earth. In the light of those facts which alone glorify our human life, so was that cold and hard emblem kindled and transformed. The winds, sighing through the scattered tops of the pines, echoed the exclamation of the thought. The clouds, passing over the landscape, in their dark burdens signalizing the sorrows that chequer human existence, which our strength cannot throw off or our wisdom cure, reflected on gigantic scale the light from that humble grave, and through the waves of the unbounded air appeared to flow the Son of God's immortal love for his followers' everlasting communion.

But the question we started with now opens into a further interrogation,— Who and what is Christ, the object or medium of this communion? The same principle or essence of the gospel rises and meets us for an answer. Christ was and is a being in communion with God, communion perfect and entire, receiving the spirit without measure. But, then, he is a being in communion with man too, and is the Son of man, wearing a human nature mixed with the divine. He alone possesses the wonderful property to fill up the whole space between God and man. His communion has two wings: one touching the heavenly throne; the other, mortal abodes. One arm is linked in God's hand, and the other in our own, for the current of eternal life to pass down into our frail bosom. He is God's approach to man, and man's approach to God. To the vision of the soul he looks as one between God and man, below God and above man; on the hither side of divinity, and the further side of humanity,—the method and channel of intercourse. He is the ideal man and a practical deity.

So instrumental and communicative is he, that an ancient sect thought he had no substantial separate existence of his own, but was a sort of phantom; and a modern sect seems to leave him hardly any distinct nature, after he expired here below. These great errors may have arisen from the remarkable fact in Christ's actual character and working, that there is in him no very sharp individuality; except

in his devotion and self-sacrifice, hardly a personal appearance about him. We call him the sun of righteousness, with more truth than we imagine. For, as the pure and shining light, that spreads through the sky, comes to no precise angular boundary, but, where opposing cloud or dark would interrupt it, only softly and gradually melts away; while its manifold beams, with inconceivable swiftness, still pass on their infinite journey of endless years; so is it with his finer lustre, blazing upon the soul, traversing the gloom of sin and error, through all the depths of the human heart, down all the generations of men. Most truly and comprehensively is he described as one in communion, double communion, with the head and members of the universal family. However the fact may baffle analysis and defy statement in our crude orthodoxy, yet he seems in his communion to be part God and part man; a Mediator that takes away all bounds of intercourse between the parent and the so-often estranged child.

On this principle of communion, as the true expression of our religion, the pattern of supreme excellence, set in God and Christ for man to copy, is not a correct outward morality, though that is indispensable, and will be a certain result. We do not feel that we adequately describe Christ in speaking of him merely as of one that tells the truth, and never violates his veracity; or as an honest man, that never invades other persons' rights; or as a

pure man, in but the sense of being unsoiled by this dusty world; or in enumerating the longest list of the decent and respectable virtues of society, though we believe every thing, even externally fair and beautiful beyond all impropriety or color of indecorum, was certainly his. We are thus far only on the outside and at the fingers' ends of his excellence. We reach the heart of it, only when, through all true words and righteous deeds, we penetrate to the warm, immense love of his communion with God and man. This communion it is, reverently be it said, that makes Christ. This communion, too, alone can make the Christian, Christ's follower.

How wondrously, too, this idea transforms the outward figure and being of Jesus himself! He is no longer simply an historic character, of whom we read, far off in the profound of time and space; walking and teaching alone in Judea, and lying down there, the victim of persecution, in his martyr-grave; nor merely one who foiled the spite of his foes in ascending the skies out of their reach, to mansions commonly regarded as vastly more distant than the other side of the globe. Through this all-conquering, everywhere-travelling power of love, he draws near. To our gaze he seems not, as to those men of Galilee, rising up to vanish in abysses of air, but rather approaching. He forsakes his station on the shore or in the synagogue, and advances toward us. He leaves his seat of glory on high, and descends upon us. Defying distance and the world's chro-

nology, mysteriously, through the intervening air, he moves to enter our hearts, as the door, like that of the room where the disciples were sitting, opens to him of its own accord. Busily he works within, writing his own life on the fleshly tables, and forming himself in us the hope of glory.

This is the never-ending marvel,— this the miracle, which is, indeed, continued from the first age through all the church, Catholic and Protestant, — namely, that Christ is here. Pilate and Cæsar are there, away, dead. Pythagoras and Plato and Socrates, whom some would look to as instructors, are not here, but in ancient Greece still, in the mould of her soil, narrowly entombed in the past. As men have often been buried with their familiar dress upon them, so they have the passion of age and clime, the obsolete costume and exploded opinion of their antiquity, inseparably cleaving to them. They can by no ingenuity be clad in any garb of universal wisdom or goodness, to occupy decently now the innermost chamber of the loftiest soul. Read the Dialogues or the Republic of the great Greek sage, and, with all the gleams of essential truth that shine through, how much is there not in harmony, but violently incongruous, with the fitting garb of an immortal teacher, universal philosopher, or even friend of humanity!

But Christ is here, both crowned by the greatest and best of the race, and, in no strange or unbecoming guise, an inhabitant of the secret recesses in

the bosom of millions. When we would imagine the proportions of his sublime existence, they stretch along the world's annals, and tower into the heavens ; and, with a humility grand as their dignity, lessen themselves, without loss of a tittle of their power, to the compass of our poor throbbing nature. He is the word, the spirit, the breath of God, breathing into the human soul, to inflame it with prayer and charity ; and we, too, inspiring that breath, may blow on the hidden spark or amid the declining embers of human virtue, till all around, out of the very ashes of prodigality and neglect, shoots up the holy fire which shall finally cleanse the earth, and, better than *Elijah's* chariot, wrap its dwellers to the skies.

This communion is no abstract and fruitless thing. If genuine, it will issue from us in every mode of gracious action. As Christ's nature was to impart, and virtue went out of him from his tongue and hand and garment's hem ; so, in his communion, virtue will go out of us. Our light and knowledge, our genius and power, or our worldly opportunities and means, will be sacrifice. So decrees the new covenant, the spiritual constitution under which we live. Such has been the increasing effect of his gospel, in producing a real oneness in the human family. Parted by diversities of race and language, by contrary customs, conflicting interests, and contending passions, whatever fraternity there is among nations, or harmony in

our homes, is largely the fruit of his religion. This is no character which weak man has built up for himself. It is not the self-righteousness wrought out by the pains and pride of an individual conscience. It is in the righteousness of Christ, not in the technical understanding of an imputed righteousness, but righteousness like his, and coming from him by inspiration. It is no Jewish strictness of manners, no hard justice of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but a burning affection, clothing human souls with a finer charm, and lighting them with a more sacred zeal. It is communion.

But, were I searching for some illustration of the beneficent operation of this new and distinctive Christian principle, I know not that I should point to those more striking consequences of it so often noted. I would not survey the great denominations of believers, marching, on their various paths of conquest, through the earth. I would not bring into sight the splendid churches reared on the face of the globe, St. Peter's or St. Paul's, with all the imposing pomp and order of their worship. Nor would the famous enterprises even of freedom, philanthropy, and civilization, with their works of industry and codes of law, and endless trains of benefit, shining along the paths of men, come into my mind. Rather would there return to me some dislodged fragment, some torn and flying scud of that life which is a vapor, some floating straw of humanity, for an index and measure of

the tide in the affairs of men. I would recall, for an instance, something like what I have seen, not long since, in a New England village ; a poor woman, lonely, far from her native land, with her thin, coarse robes fluttering in the cold March breeze that blustered by, sitting down at the road-side under a hedge, and, heedless of every passer, in her own foreign tongue, repeating aloud the prayers of the religious communion in which she had been brought up. Some such obscure fact would recur in demonstration, that, when the spire of childhood's church, like the light-house to the out-sailing mariner, has faded and sunk in the distance from the exile's eye ; when the familiar voice in supplication is no longer heard ; and the choir, to sing the verses out of David's Psalms, in which the sojourner, now in a strange land, once mingled jubilant notes, is for ever disbanded ; yet, with a more than brotherly or sisterly bond, the union of spirits from and in Christ still holds, and raises wanderers, from the corners of the world, in the same worship and trust to the skies ; or perhaps enables our own kindred in another zone, with their expiring breath, to yield up the ghost to God in the same faith which consoles us for their departure.

This Christian communion, in fine, makes us responsible, not only for ourselves, but for all within the circle of our life. As some plants make the air wholesome, and others turn it to a deadly poison,

so is it with our own atmosphere. Christ came, and left in charge to his followers, to sweeten the air of existence. Therefore descended he from heaven; therefore his followers live on earth. In the affairs of this world, every member, of whatever partnership or association, is someway responsible for the whole. So, in the Christian tie, can we not escape a joint more than our personal nature and judgment. Our moral as well as political and social life is solid, and woven without seam. If the company which we constitute prosper not, sin lieth at the door. Jesus Christ, separate from sinners, seemed to feel responsible for all mankind, Hebrew and Greek, Gentile and stranger. To bear truly his name, so must we. So must we, to illustrate the principle — the new commandment well did he call it — which he brought down with him, to link men together, and to lift them up.

DISCOURSE XIV.

 THE CHRISTIAN FORMULA OF BAPTISM.

Matt. xxviii. 19. — GO YE, THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THIS “name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” on the power of which the universal baptism of the world is thus suspended, has always been one of the great clauses of our religion. Perhaps no other phrase of the New Testament has been so frequently spoken; has so widely prevailed, and been learned by heart, as the gospel’s grand expression; has borne down such a weight of historic meaning in notable events and stirring passages among Christians; of whose significance and effect it has been itself the cause or culmination, or at this moment holds, pours out in the world, or carries to heaven, in solemn appeal, so much earnestness and sometimes agony of emotion. Nothing have the tongues of elders in the church so often devoutly ejaculated, or the ears of children wonderingly heard. From lips, warm with zeal and love, it has swelled up in how many a prayer! In strains

of what power and sweetness it has sounded forth in many a musical hosanna! Of what solemn vows and consecrations it has been the seal; and furnished the most binding sanction, and held for millions, in the close tie of its complex meaning, the strongest life-long bonds! Judged by the effects it produces, by the engagements to God and man it sustains, or by the everlasting sense its few words convey to the soul, it is the greatest sentence of human speech. Nor has it been allowed to become the proof-text, support, or peculiar property of any one portion of Christendom or class of Christians; but, while different sects have torn asunder, each into its own favorite piece and fragment, the Master's teaching, as his garment was torn at his crucifixion, this saying, as though its sublimity had constrained special regard, and its purport were everywhere felt essential to faith, has been claimed and used by all.

But wherein consists its singular power? I answer, that this last commission of Christ to his followers is at once the most brief and most comprehensive form of the whole doctrine of his religion respecting the divine nature. The great point in a revelation from heaven evidently is how to bring the Almighty and Unimaginable One into contact with the human mind. By the pure intellect this seems a problem insolvable. No logical power can lay hold of the divine existence. The greatest of truths seems most to illustrate the quaint proposi-

tion of a remarkable modern writer, that the understanding is the least faculty of a man. The annals of all philosophy show that there is no height so inaccessible, and no abyss so deep, as the Source of all that is. No man alone ever got to it yet. Truly the world by wisdom knew not God. No agility of pure intellect ever clambered to the cloudy top of this mountain, or descended to the bottom of this well of truth. Strength fails, the eye waxes dim, the light of the torch of science goes out: only the unaccountable instinct, with its best of all vouchers of reality, still rises or gropes, and unceasingly feels after God.

Now, the gospel is distinguished from the schemes of human wisdom, in that it gives us no metaphysics of the Deity; deals in none of those abstractions which the brain of man, for ever busy on this theme, has so plentifully brought forth. Contrariwise, it declares the impossibility of our knowing the essence of God. It warns us away from that pit of unbelief, mental confusion, atheism, and loss of all moral distinctions, into which so many brave intellects, in their unaided adventures of curious speculation to explore and settle the origin and foundation of all things, have gone down. It reveals no way, by searching, to find out God. But it shows us close at our door what we had sought afar off. It remands us to our own hearts, to the instincts of love and duty and reverence involved in our first natural relations; and brings down from the highest

heaven the teaching that is met by a sentiment soaring up from the depths of our own bosom. Turning to a symbol the great bond of parent and child, that links all mankind together, it tells us that God is our Father. Then it makes that wonderful and inconceivable Being, who lifts as a little thing the fathomless universe he creates, to touch our feeling still more nearly by presenting the Messenger of his truth and will to men as his own Son; not alone in the sense in which the feeblest spark of a rational intelligence, shining with the faintest, most intermittent glow-worm lustre on any point in all the spheres, is so; but his Son in something like that near and equal tie that binds one generation of mortals to another; his Son by an immediate and measureless inspiration, the offspring of his immortal purity and love; his Son by having a character, temper, and purpose, a breadth and holiness of aim, like his own; his Son by carrying on plans of grace and mercy and infinite wisdom in harmonious co-operation with the absolute and eternal One, as a child might understand and effect any particular worldly business jointly with his earthly sire. We are, indeed, all of us children of God, with worship and affection capable, in the training of our religion, of aspiring to him from whom we came. But this evangelical idea of Christ's Sonship exceeds all that any of us can presume in his own person to have expressed. Its realization in Jesus causes him to be peculiarly

God's Son; and the discrimination, implied in the second term of our text, remains.

Thus Christianity gives us none of those poor divinities constructed by argument, the puny product of our yet infantile reasoning, without life or power, remaining as the inert figments of the contradictory theories by which they have been begotten; but a Divinity, with all his immensity in action, taking hold of us by our heartstrings, and with that relation of Father and Son which makes the creation throughout tremble with native veneration and joy, agitating all living spirits that have come to know him, and drawing them to himself.

But thus far the divine nature seems to approach us from without, as the natural tie of parent and child, through the senses, penetrates the soul. So only represented, God might appear too much an external existence, a figure in space, a movement through the air, a gross and material personality under the mortal limitations we endure. Therefore, justly to balance the idea of God to the mind, without making it less affecting, the vital and operative quality of the Christian doctrine is completed by adding the Holy Ghost, proceeding from God himself directly, or emanating from the now unseen Christ, and answering in the breast to all that comes from the incarnation of knowledge and goodness without, flesh on the one side and spirit on the other, assumed by the same first mysterious

Energy to unite his own sanctifying influence to our erring and sinful nature.

These three terms, then, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, constitute the grand Christian formula of the Deity, considered as practically at work in the world to redeem and save. Vast and very marvellous is its implication of power. This mode of instruction respecting the supreme reality, so baffling the inquiry which would scale the heavens, has brought Him that formed us very near; has made us feel his hand upon us and hear his whisper within us, and built a ladder on which little children can climb up after him into the skies. He no longer remains a faint conception, that appears or vanishes like a revolving light; one among other notions, ever changing their bodiless and unsubstantial shapes to the versatile fancy by which they are produced; but becomes a force upon which we lean and cannot escape from, an arm against which we strike in our transgression or are led in our obedience. He is let down upon us from above, encompasses us around, and stands before our wayward steps, like the angel of the Lord of old, invisibly fronting the prophet. The very air that we breathe is now thick with his presence. The cords that run through us link him to our side. He moves among our very thoughts, and startles our interior consciousness with his whisper or admonition. In every design and motion we are constrained to apprehend him, with gladness or a

shudder, as our aim coincides with or is contrary to his will. God *as* the Father, *in* the Son and *through* the Holy Spirit, besets us behind and before, and lays his hand upon us by virtue of those emotions, which, excited from abroad or internally aroused, are the strongest and most constant forces in our nature.

This scriptural disclosure of God, in which, more than in any other conception, he appears with a presence wide and powerful among the nations, does not, however, divide him into manifestations, but preserves the essence, while it displays the various working, of the Deity. The essence is the divine paternity. We never speak, and the Bible never speaks, of God as revealed through the Father. God is the Father who is revealed. God, in his very nature, is the Father manifested by the Son. God *is* the Father, *in* the Son, *through* the Holy Spirit. His fatherhood is his own original character; not in Christ's statement a dramatic show to human fancy, not merely a figure of speech drawn from the relation of an earthly father respecting him, but his veritable being. The earthly parentage is the figure of speech taken from God, who is alone the real Father. The earthly parentage is the shadow cast, not upon him from below, but into time, among human relations, from his eternal reality. To reverse this, to make God's parentage the projection and mere figure of man's, instead of man's the result and borrowed reflection of God's;

and then to deny us the power of coming into actual communion with him, more than by playing with his semblance in our conceit, is to assign the strength and glory to the effect not to the cause, give us a stone for bread, and plunge us into utter unbelief and despair. No : God verily is the Father ; not to be compassed by our logic, but embraced by our consciousness in an apprehension as true and undeceiving, as is our apprehension of the world, or a fellow-creature, or our own soul.

So much is in this chief Christian formula, which makes God not a remote mathematical unity, but a related being ; and all things, in the region of matter or spirit, alive and burning with his manifold activity. Verily, a great discovery to the world is that oneness of God, the common crown of Judaism and the gospel, before whose universal and transcendent light the countless hosts of Pagan deities flee away, and the gloom of a hopeless, confounding pantheism is scattered.

But we have not attained to such a fulness of knowledge as some fancy, in ascertaining the simple oneness of God. We want also to know who and what this one Being is. We want not merely to see him sit in the absolute original loneliness, which none beside can disturb or share ; but, somehow, also leaving his far station of incommunicable glory, becoming a social being, communicating even himself, and multiplying his own image. It moves us more to understand that the humble and contrite

heart is his abode, than that the heaven is his temple. We rejoice to believe, that the reason why the heaven of heavens cannot contain him is because he desires to dwell in the lowly human breast. He calls not such interest to himself when he goes forth from the primeval palace of his eternal home, to people his dominion with sparkling globes, by matchless mechanism and wondrous art, a solitary builder and painter, between whose awful genius and the creatures that he animates is an impassable gulf,—as he does when he breathes into individual forms a kindred nature, makes the thunder articulate to declare the Dearly-begotten and Only-beloved, in whom he is well pleased; or, with instant impulse of his own essential spirit, enters into our frame.

What similar manifestations he may have made of himself in other lands of his boundless territory, we are ignorant. For this world, we are glad that we can not only see him fashioning it for our mortal home, and pouring out, in due mixture, the elements that compose its fair and habitable surface; but, while the ground crumbles under our feet, and the waves roll ceaseless to the wasting shore, and the billowy air sweeps unconfined over our head, that nothing but the tent which we occupy belongs to the fluctuating, perishable scene; that, by his Messiah and an inward anointing, assuring us of our childhood and his paternity, he has signed the title of our immortal being. Drowning in the tide

of the multitude of our own thoughts within us, or stumbling on the brink of the grave, this divine activity, the Father in the Son, through the Spirit, comes to our aid. A threefold cord is not soon broken. And these three glories of our religion,—God as the Father, in the Son, through the Holy Spirit,—into which the dazzling and insupportable effulgence of the Uncreated parts, as with a branching triple lustre, light us on our way through the perplexities of life, and over the dark valley of death.

We can scarcely exaggerate the essential value of the Christian formula, or rise above the broad general Christian consciousness of its worth. Its precious and powerful quality, however, does not depend on any curious logical explanation of its terms. It is made clear by no subtlety of the schools, but in that simple interpretation, given by human nature itself, in the exercise of its own inborn feelings, as developed by the actual relations of life. The attempt to analyze these paternal, filial, and spiritual ideas, to reduce them to their ground, and discover the comparative rank of the substances they represent, is to go back into that very gulf of boundless and barren speculation, from which, by the gospel, the human intellect has been plucked. The scripture-illustration of the divine nature acting on the human soul cannot be measured or resolved by our thought, but can be felt in our heart, and admitted to renew our life. It wants

no reducing fire and crucible of philosophy for its test, but our realizing imagination and feeling for its acceptance. Every change of it, by argument, from its primary cast, every mark of man's fingers upon it, has been but deformity and injury. The transmutation, for example, of the Spirit of God into a distinct person, in order then to assert a co-equality of three persons, has produced nothing but confusion and strife, by its addition of man's reasoning to the divine word, that reveals God as the Father, in the Son, through the Holy Spirit. Nay, it contradicts the word, in which the Spirit always appears as a breathing and quality, a flame or a gift, not as a person; and which contains Christ's own unalterable affirmations that his Father is greater than himself, and that God, as distinguished from all others, alone is good.

Let it not be said, that I displace an adversary's dogmatism with my own. I but open, from all grounds of sectarian battle, a retreat to the hills, to re-form, as one army, back at those impregnable lines of defence in the revelation itself, where Christians may stand together and be unconquerable, not by each other, but by all the skepticism, error, and sin of the world. If one must use his own words to elucidate his own understanding of the record, certainly no shape into which the Christian doctrine may be thus put, need ever be used to exclude any who hold to the Christian formula. To banish from fellowship a man noble with purity and piety, and

accepting the volume of faith in its own expressions, because he agrees not in the precise sense fixed on those expressions by consociation or synod; and to make, perhaps, the charity to believers of every name, which he adds to his other graces, the reason for coldly turning the back upon him; or to shut out of communion on earth, or, if that could be, hope in heaven, a denomination of men for the peculiarity of their honest persuasion in the sense of the only authority, is a sin against that very Holy Ghost which is rent by the excommunication, and grieved by the dispute. For the Christian formula itself is no wedge of division, but an inclusive bond of union; and is perverted to a purpose directly contrary to its own genius and design, when it is changed from the soft bandage of healing to the keen instrument of a wound. Verily, so wide as it is in its language, avoiding all the sharp and thorny distinctions of man's device, by which we are so tangled and severed, it is Christ's own easy and blessed yoke under which all may come, Catholic and Protestant, Trinitarian and Unitarian, Establishment and Dissent, yielding to every one, with its regenerating power, also the double blessing of freedom of thought and largeness of love.

In exercising the privilege of independent convictions, under our Leader's banner, that floats so broadly in the heavens, bearing no fine illegible characters on its folds, but the blazonry of ideas

which the young can read, and which are made so large and liberal, as if not to summon a little clan to its following, but all the ranks and varieties of mankind, — shall we be exiled by any, with whom on minor points we may differ, from the benediction of their sympathy? But, we ask, do we not adhere to the Christian formula? Do we not feel the invisible, everlasting print and high title made by the stainless water of baptism on our foreheads to sink through into the tables of our hearts? Has it not been uttered over the innocent brows of our children? Has not what, of all the sun shines on, is most prized by us, been placed under its seal? Have we not made offerings to it when our soul ran out in tears, and our very breath was prayer? Has not the voice of venerable servants of God, mellowed and sanctified by the old but ever-fresh affection it inspires, poured out at once the blessing upon us and the dedication into the ear of the Most High? And is it all in vain because of inconformity to the pattern of a council's creed, or mode of administration unsquared to some ecclesiastic's canon? Must the supplications that have glorified and exalted our humanity to heaven be taken back, and the very witness of God's spirit insultingly returned to him; and all that is most alive in the past become dead, and what is fullest to us of joy and hope be empty and void? Shall the food that has satisfied our hearts' hunger be now at length, at a fellow-creature's arbitrary order, thrown away, and the

embalming that has soothed our hearts' wounds be torn off?

No, not so! God will not have it so. Divine and human love, woven together, and stretching their endless web across temporal bounds, to retain for ever, even in the eternal vastness, what it has once been fastened to, will consent to no such dreadful disallowing or blasting erasure. The transaction is laid away in the Infinite Mind, that gives not up, and in the last and most enduring niche of human memory; and its pledge is in that true, common formula of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with the cordial sincerity of the pronunciation and the never-cooling fervor of the response. Indeed, does not that very formula plead with us for the charitable feeling that is immortally twin with real devotion? Does it not expostulate with the bigotry that would limit its own gracious extent, and mingle indignant remonstrances against human oppression with mild petitions of divine mercy? Yea, it stands in inefaceable characters on the register; it maintains its own equal dignity, whether in the simple service of a few, or the loud and multitudinous anthem of thousands; under the echoing roof of huge cathedrals, or beneath the little spire of a village meeting-house; in scenes where centuries of worship heap their associations of its momentous import, or on the new-cut soil where strangers and emigrants celebrate for themselves and their little ones the ancient faith; and it solemnly, irresistibly demands,

in its own unabused simplicity, to roll as a harmony of peace and a chorus of praise round the world. In its own intrinsic largeness is this unstinted requirement.

May I say, that, while musing on this sublime formula of our religion, and considering its power and spread, — as I walked on the shore of the limitless sea, or in the depth of interminable woods, or beneath that starry vault that seems so great when, beyond the streets of cities, we are out on the open floor of the world, — I have felt there was, in its little line, a strength and beauty equivalent with the diffusive splendor around, and deserving to be set forth in the threefold, strangely-accordant melodies, inseparable one from the other, of the winds and the waves and the woods. Not always indeed does it have its due unison. No doubt it sounds sweet and pure on the mixing tones and harp-strings of the angels. But here the same fearful tribute and strangely conclusive argument of profaneness, which is paid to the name of God, is impiously rendered to it also. In the oath of a blaspheming tongue, sometimes in the protocols and proclamations and unholy alliances of corrupt nations, making it forsooth their voucher; sometimes in shouts of hostile vengeance, or the rolling of rocks on the heads of invading foes, has it been called. But this is comparatively rare and exceptional. Its true office in furthering all that is right and good in humanity, and forwarding that reign of

the Prince of peace which is the kingdom of God, will prevail, till it becomes no more vain on earth than it is in heaven.

I have thus spoken of the Christian baptismal formula, not in its application to that rite which is the emblem of Christian purity, but in that idea which makes its application important and plain. We shall not, indeed, fail to see what a grandeur and title to stand baptism derives from its special connection, by Christ, with this main formula of our faith. I engage not in the debate of minute questions respecting the proper mode and subjects of this ordinance. Not many words are needed to propound the truth of these points. The charge of Christ to baptize all nations, with no qualification on the license of his words; his invitation of little children to himself; the absence of all proof that the baptism of children was not the original practice; and the certainty that, if not, it so soon and surely arose out of the developed consciousness of the Christian church; the symbolic implication of the rite, so much stronger for those born in the nurture of the body of Christ, than for those born in Paganism and belonging to recent half-instructed converts to the Christian faith; with the manifest intrinsic propriety and incalculable benefit of its unforbidden observance, are sufficing reasons for the offering of childhood to the Lord; though, in these latter, as necessarily in the first times, that life, which has not been brought to the altar in

infancy, should all the more be devoted in maturity ; while it is not respectful to the lofty port and generous temper of our religion to suppose it credible that the difference, in one or another land, an arctic or a tropic latitude, — of fountain, stream, or bowl, — can be cause of offence or partial favor with God ; that he will either be displeased with the varying practice occasioned by imperative diversity of circumstance, or flattered by the literal and mechanical imitation of original custom.

But, however the rite of baptism may be administered, it has one and the same signification, setting forth always the Christian purity in which those receiving it should abide or be kept. Of the two great ideas of our religion, Holiness and Love, one stands behind the Lord's table, and the other guards the baptismal font. It is, then, no slight thing, when, on your own brow you feel, or offer the forehead of your child to take, this sign, which led on Judaism into Christianity. It is a consecration to the Lord. It is a vow, that, leaning on Christ, trusting and praying for God's help, you will, so far as in you lies, live, and train your offspring to live, with clean hands and an unspotted soul. How, then, in view of such a promise, does your baptism, or the baptism of your sons and daughters, look upon you from the years that are past ? Has any soil come upon the water that flowed so pure ? Has it become corrupt by touching you ? Have you preserved, in those born

to you, the innocence which was transparent as itself when its drops were sprinkled? Oh! there is in the world nothing sadder than to see old or young brought, by a worldly will or depraved example, to regard this act of dedication as but a customary, unmeaning incident in their existence, without virtue to hold them to any fixed principle; and so, like ships parting their rotten cables, borne into straits of temptation, or plunging in the whirlpools of vice. God notes the sacrilege. He records the violation of a pledge which we may not even care to remember; and who shall say whether forgetfulness of obligation, or bold departure from our engagements, be in his sight the greater guilt? Yet the sin and woe involved in breaking our agreement, or being unfaithful to our charge, must not hinder us from using for ourselves, and for our posterity, the means of sanctity and improvement which he has provided. For how greatly blessed to the world's purification this baptismal bowl has been! How it has washed the very hearts of men! What stains, that would yield to no other water or earthly fire, have left the soul under its gentle stream! Like a river falling from the skies, its mild outpouring has at once cleansed millions from iniquity, and defended new generations against evil. Let us still stand under it!

However parting in methods of outward procedure, let us also abide together by the unchangeable Christian formula of baptism. Let it put its

luminous lesson into our minds, and its warm embrace about our hearts. Let us keep it closer and dearer to us than the Jews did their sacred sentences on their frontlets and phylacteries. Let it be deeper than the palm of our hands, or a signet on our head. Let us hold any disposition to depart from or disuse it, as the sad indication of an unwise judgment laying aside the Christian standard to rear a flag of its own. Let it mould our spiritual frame into reverence and love, and have an issue of righteousness and goodness in our life. Let it inform our earthly existence with a heavenly meaning, till we reach that heavenly country, where, by virtue of the helps here vouchsafed, we shall join in yet more vivid and expressive converse, to communicate with one another in the same glorious, infinite reality.

DISCOURSE XV.

THE RELIGION OF FORM, OF DOCTRINE,
AND OF SPIRIT.

John iv. 23. — BUT THE HOUR IS COMING, AND NOW IS, WHEN THE
TRUE WORSHIPPERS SHALL WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND
IN TRUTH.

So replies Jesus to the Samaritan woman's suggestion of the dispute between her countrymen and the Jews as to the proper place of worship. He does not, in using such language, discourage the setting apart of particular places and times for worship; but contradicts the idea that any one spot on the earth's surface, whether it were a mountain-top or a magnificent temple, was only or peculiarly fit for offering it to God. Sincere worship, being a thing of truth and spirit, he declares could be rendered anywhere; but he does not assert it should be rendered nowhere. He himself chose special places for his private devotions, and went up with others to public dedicated courts to join in their solemn, seasonable instruction and praise, while he bore ever in his heart the universal, eternal spirit of thanksgiving and adoration. In discrowning Gerizim and Jerusalem of their exclusive glory, he but

meant to say to the woman, "There is no monopoly of sacredness within the precincts either of your nation or mine: men shall not be for ever bound to travel from all quarters to our capitol or to your hill-top after God; but hereafter and very soon there shall be sanctuaries of homage reared and frequented, with no limit of territory or numbers, wherein to seek the Most High whom I have truly revealed; this now-confined consecration shall spread over the earth; men shall kneel alone or together, and nothing but the secret spirit of their private or united devotions be regarded by Him who is a Spirit."

To understand Christ otherwise, as frowning upon all but a purely individual reverence of the Almighty, would make him to deny that social character of religion, which requires some actual outward manner of proceeding, to disallow his own personal example, and to come in conflict with his expressed purpose of building up a church. We must, however, interpret him as warning us against putting the essence of piety in externals, whatever externals may be needed to conduct its exercises decently and in order; and this conclusion may lead us to consider, in their relation to one another, three kinds of religion existing in the world, — the religion of Form, the religion of Doctrine, and the religion of Spirit. These three are, of course, characterized, not according to their only, but their severally predominating, element.

The religion of Form magnifies the importance of every thing outward that may be brought into relation with worship. It studies an imposing effect in the building and decoration of the temple. It multiplies rites and ceremonies, repeats them often, lengthens them out greatly, clothes them with a mysterious significance, and makes them the only or necessary channels of grace and salvation. With especial carefulness it arranges the modes of prayer, attaches a serious consequence to their smallest particulars of phrase and manner, gathers the supplications suited to all occasions into a book, and hardly trusts the heart to open its own volume in any immediate outbreak and ejaculation to Him that sitteth in the heavens. Of such moment does it hold an assured propriety and perfect decorum in approaching the throne of grace, that it would prescribe the very terms and measures of the human soul's devoutness to its Author, and dictate the method and speech of its love. Were we to read off from a printed page our respect and affection to a friend, it would seem but freezing coldness and cruel affront. But so vast it reckons the difference between the human and the divine, that it would shut up to the lines of long tradition, and the venerable ink of past centuries, all the joint, if not the solitary, outpourings of the bosom to the Deity. Nor, strange as this may seem, does it want plausible, if not convincing, arguments of uniformity and familiarity in favor of its course.

It would, moreover, link together the members of the priesthood, by which its ceremonial is carried on, in an unbroken continuance and apostolic succession; and introduce them after a way in all respects adjusted to invariable conditions, pre-ordaining their whole procedure through each successive ordinance, and descending to fashion the very style and settle the color of their dress.

I speak of this religion in description, not in reproach. It lacks not a kind of philosophy in its support. It operates powerfully on a multitude of minds. Men are wrought upon through the senses; and it would take the tempted and wandering senses captive with holy sights and sounds. Men are creatures of association; and it would bind them in cords of sacred associations, that shall be stronger than the bands of wickedness. The sound of a church-bell melts the bloody conqueror in a hundred fights; and the sight of a procession enthalls the Protestant thinker, whose boyhood carried trains and censers in the cathedrals of Rome. Men are not apt to weigh the force of labored logic and learned abstractions; and this religion of form would not trust them to the precarious and fugitive reasonings of their own minds, but hold them fast within the firm enclosure of manifest signs, appointed seasons, and oft-renewed festivals. It builds a splendid prison-house, which, if it hinders the eye from roaming all over the world, directs its gaze, through narrow openings, upward to the sky.

Very different from the religion of form is that of Doctrine. It simplifies the ceremonial of worship; makes it plain and flexible. It is content with a cheap and unadorned structure for its sanctuary. It asks none but ascertained intellectual and moral qualifications in its preachers. It regards Christianity, not as an ecclesiastical institution, but a scheme of truth for the regeneration of the world. It is chiefly anxious to settle the exact meaning of the message from God, and fix the precise grounds of his salvation. Any mistake or misconstruction of these, it deems fatal. It reduces the divine revelation into creeds, makes subscription to them the condition of Christian fellowship, and their denial a heresy excluding at once from the church on earth, and the felicities of heaven.

Lastly, the religion of Spirit makes nothing essential but the principles of love and righteousness in the heart. Ordinances it considers as mainly efficacious in the dispositions with which they are approached, and agrees with the old Confession of Faith in esteeming the truth of doctrines valuable only "in order to goodness."

Now, without further delineation, I shall presume that this last is substantially the religious position of those whom I address. Character is with us the one thing needful. As we maintain and profess, worship consists not in the place where we bow, or in the words we say, or in the official persons

we follow. It is in no voice of confession, choral harmony, or tone of a hosanna; but only in the lowly soul's bend and whisper or cry to the unseen Creator. We see the glory of the altar in no costly decoration, but in the transfiguring presence of God lighting up the sacrifice through the expanding hearts of the worshippers, and in the common glow of a congregation's praise, clothing the plainest building with a dignity as great as ever hung on massive walls, or rose through huge tower and along soaring spire. Nor does a complicated system of intellectual belief, any more than an imposing and ostentatious service, win our regard. We strive not after the sense of God's word through a battle of proof-texts, by conflict or comparison of passages; but to our eyes the great truths of the gospel lie broadcast on the page of Scripture, to be transferred by the unlettered to the tables in the breast.

Such is our position. But, in regard to any position which we may assume, the question is, Do we sustain it? The question, in this particular case, is likely to be severe and piercing. Pitying and rejecting the monstrous manifold growth of formalities, enjoined as of vital consequence through so large a portion of the church, are any of us the poorest formalists by being listless observers of our short and simple ritual? Seeing no miraculous transformation of the consecrated elements, do we yet exchange the solemn mystery of our fellow-

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Christians for a hollow and heartless show? Slighting the fixed posture, monotonous accent, and unvarying phraseology of others' devotions, does our theory of spontaneous veneration degenerate into the worst of repetitions, as meagre as it is lawless, and as inconsiderable in honesty as it is small in pretence? Grandly saying that the universe is God's temple, what does it signify if we do not prostrate ourselves therein? Fondly intimating that the sabbath-day is no more holy than any other, what matters it if all our time be not holy? Arguing that not a few official personages alone, but every believing soul, may preach the gospel, what is the argument from our lips worth if we are no faithful preachers? Re-echoing the shallow maxim, No matter what a man's creed is if his life be right, — as though there were not some connection between his creed and his conduct, — with what face do we presume to offer a life not seconding the proposition? Ah! it is a sad thought, that there may be those making much of little subtleties of speculation, or as superstitious in their holidays as ever was a Jew about his new moons; yet, under this moral disadvantage, sincerer worshippers of Almighty God than we, with our intuitions of his everlasting truth, or our exalted sense of his unbounded glory. How many a man, with stout complacency and delightful self-flattery, affirms the seat of religion to be in the heart, when he himself, more than his creed-making or

idolatrous neighbors, is confined to the cold reasonings of the head! A poor, lifeless fetich may be made out of our brain, as well as by the ignorant savage from wood or stone.

Such for us is the issue. It follows upon our position. It indicates the point of our obligation. It applies the test which we elect, and calls for sentence upon us by the laws we have glorified. God grant that the sentence put us not to shame, or that shame awaken us to the honor of consistency on the basis by which we have determined to abide, instead of finally confounding us at the judgment-day! Perhaps we shall conclude, that, however it may be with others in their theory of form or of doctrine, we carry our theory of spirit far enough, far as God's word or man's nature, or our own capacity for pure religion, will justly suffer. Perhaps we shall decide, that our error is not likely to be an extravagant over-heeding of religious institutions; that it will not do for us to neglect the few and simple means which we own; and that nothing but a religious vanity could lead any of us to suppose ourselves so spiritual that we can safely put them off with the occasional half-respect of weary and inanimate souls. If angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, are engaged in expressions of their homage in heaven, we may not despise the steps of adoration by which we are permitted to rise from the earth. The act is not the end, but may lead us thereto, as the inferior instrument of iron

is necessary to lay open the precious mine of gold. If our spirituality be but an excuse, and our heart occupied with the false gods of this world instead of the living presence of the Holy One, we are of all believers most miserable; and the most ignorant and infatuated worshipper in the Catholic or the most bigoted and uncharitable devotee, compassing sea and land for one proselyte in the Protestant church, will enter the kingdom before us.

In fine, of the three religions described, no one can be true to human nature as against the rest, but all as fitly united. Thought, feeling, and expression go together, re-act on and produce each other; as heat, growing intense, sparkles into fire, and the nature of fire is to spread and communicate new heat. The tide of emotion in the heart swells from sublime contemplation, and from the overburdened breast ebbs into expression; but that very ebb, like the ocean's, is to bring back the flood. Only let the manifestation of our religion be no feigned warmth or wilful ostentation, but the real kindling and irrepressible overflow of our soul. Let it be, as it was with Christ, according to these illustrations, but the rise and scintillation of elements unfathomable in their depth, boundless in their heaving, and of a power and diffusion to purify all nature, and wrap the universe in their genial fostering flame. Then, according to his prophecy, spirit and truth and worship well-proportioned will be with us one and inseparable.

DISCOURSE XVI.

THE COMMON GROUND OF MOSAIC AND
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

Exod. iii. 5, and Acts vii. 33. — THE PLACE WHEREON THOU
STANDEST IS HOLY GROUND.

THIS remarkable address to Moses, recorded in the Old Testament, and quoted in the New by the first martyr Stephen, that he might show to his countrymen the divine connection between the religion of their fathers and the Christian faith, may be properly used to express an idea common to both economies of the divine revelation. Why was the ground where Moses stood called holy? It could have been made such by none of the ordinary associations or conventional ideas of sanctity.

There was no temple, no altar, no religious congregation, no solemn service. Moses was but keeping Jethro's flock, which he had led far away from the haunts of men, where no path ran, no dwelling stood, even to the back-side of the desert, till he came to the wild and woody mountain of Horeb. There, while his eye followed the sheep, and his thoughts, kindling as he mused, rose to him, —

"By whose strength the mountains stand,
God of eternal power," —

the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, burning but unconsumed; and God called to him, saying, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." As priests, from time immemorial, have performed religious services and gone up to their holy places with their feet bare, — this most ancient traditionary custom being observed among the Mahometans and other nations even to this day, — so Moses was required to give the same signal mark of reverence and awe.

But the question recurs, Wherefore was that place so holy? Because, though no shrine of wood or stone had ever been reared there, and no sacrifice had blazed and smoked up to heaven, but all was bare creation, just as it was left under the hand of the Maker, yet the Omnipresent One had appeared to his servant. So every place where we may meet and commune with God is holy ground. This house of our united solemnities of worship we call God's sanctuary, and so it is; but not such a house alone does his presence exclusively hallow. As a building dedicated to his service, we should regard it tenderly, enter and leave it with reverence; but our reverence and adoration are not, as we go, to be slipped like loose garments from our soul, nor, merely like a priest's robes, put superficially on again as we come back; but to be con-

tinually with us. As the flame in the burning bush answered to a flame in Moses' heart, so, wherever this secret coal burns on the unseen altar, which is more observed by God than any outward and cubic frame hewn from rock and hung with jewels, — there, in the bosom of his creature, will he give the answering witness of his spirit.

Under the influence of Christianity, the old superstition of a peculiar and merely local holiness is passing away. Once the temple was a refuge from the pursuit of justice. Even the robber and murderer could not be torn from the horns of the altar. But now, to us, God's temple is the universe; the place where the deed of violence and of blood is done is a holy place, which that deed profanes. If we swear, sacred walls echo our oath. If we lie, it is before the pure Observer. If we steal, our theft is sacrilegious, within the limits of the divine dwelling. If we lay an injurious hand upon a fellow-creature, we violate sacred instruments as much as Nebuchadnezzar did when he took the priestly vessels from the temple at Jerusalem, or Belshazzar and his company when they drank from them the wine of revelry and intoxication. If, by any cruelty, we shorten our brother's life, the voice of his blood shall cry to God from the ground. Yea, the earth, being all "holy ground," — the earth that has opened her mouth to drink up the stream of slaughter, or has covered with her fine dust the footprints of wickedness, or buried in her graves the signs of any crime

or injury, — shall be a witness against the guilty, and show to the All-seeing the marks of her own desecration.

So, too, every good deed wherever done, every right word wherever spoken, shall be as sacred to God, and soar up as soon to his acceptance, as though it were chanted here in an anthem or performed in a religious rite. Think you the pure meditations of Moses in Midian, or his lowly acknowledgments of an Almighty Providence, found a less willing Deity than if they had been poured out with all the ceremonials of knife and flame and victim, or than any of the psalms which the Levites sang within the marble columns and the gold-plaited, glistening walls of the temple that afterwards rose at Jerusalem? "I tell you, nay." The burning bush upon the hill-side, with the savage waste of the surrounding plain, was as noble a shrine as should ever be carved from granite or tower with rafter and pinnacle.

It does not demand any great and noted place or vast assemblage to give fit room and opportunity for your accents of good cheer and sympathy with your fellow-men or your heroic achievements. "The place where thou standest is holy ground." Ay, and the truth thou tellest, the righteous act thou doest, hallows it. The maintenance of justice, the defence of liberty, the sacrifices of love, will give it sanctity; be it plain or hill, shore or stream, or the tossing waves of the sea. Thermo-

pylæ and Plymouth Rock and Bunker Hill were not famous places, but made such by patriotic devotion and religious self-denial. The pillow where the good man, like Jacob, sleeps, though it be but as the cold, gray stones of Haran, shall have angels ascending and descending upon it. When the famous Hungarian, who has so beyond all other men of late divided the opinion of the world, on resigning his office of governor to become a simple citizen, declared, "In my opinion, war is but the means, and not the end, of the country's salvation; and, unless I see a probability of attaining the object I have at heart, I will never sanction war for its own sake alone, nor give my countenance to any forced levy," — the splendors of victory and the clouds of defeat alike pass away before the glory of that humane sentiment, which illumines the political council-chamber, the still camp, and the smoking field of battle.

The place which we stand on, wherever it be, we may hallow. The spot where we resisted temptation, shed tears of repentance, showed great forgiveness or noble generosity, forsook an evil habit, helped a needy sufferer, lightened any human heart, or gave our own heart to God, is holy. Wherever we are, God is with us; spiritual beings, angel-spectators, as a cloud of witnesses, encompass us. Only the body, which we wear as a veil, hangs between; and their voice should ever be heard in our ear, harmonious with the voice of God, saying

to us, "The place where thou standest is holy ground."

"The place where thou standest," is it not a place, which, by the creative power, working for ages through shifting land and sea, has been built up for thee to stand upon, and do God's will? No place to take his name in vain, or, with indecent jesting, affront his purity, but a place rather to worship him; as Madame Guyon tells us, finding, in her journey on the river Seine, a dry and solitary place, she sought intercourse with God. As in the "great sheet" let down to Peter, "wherein were all manner of beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air," there was yet nothing "common or unclean;" so there is no common or unclean place in God's creation; no solitude, where, as in a covert, we can with impunity bestow our folly or our sin; no fit place for the deceiver or oppressor, for theft or piracy, for the secret meeting of the duellist or profligate. The place where corruption is established is a stain on the earth. The building in which a murder has been done, has to the traveller's eye blood running down its walls. The scene of a brawl, be it the common street or the floor of the national council, is desecrated. Our inordinate passions, our mean propensities, can find no proper lodging in God's world. The temple of Mammon! There is legitimately no such place. The purlieus of vice! Vice is not the rightful occupant, however long her precedent, or firm her prescription.

The saloons of fashion! Fashion is a usurper, if she presume to set up vanity and excess, or displace modesty, simplicity, and truth. The "haunts" of iniquity, the retirements of sin, the most confined apartments of plot and base conspiracy, the privacy of the threatener or defrauder, the tyranny of the oppressor, the middle passage of the slave, God, the holy Inspector, Disapprover, is in them all, witnessing the profanation of his presence and works.

So, there is no place which we cannot hallow and dignify by wisdom and virtue, even as we hallow the name of God. If Paul stand on Mars' Hill, it shall be for ever marked, not as the place of criminal arraignment or warlike debate, but as the pulpit of the sublimest of all discourses about the nature of God, and the duty and destiny of man. Shall not our Master's own life teach us? Not alone synagogue and temple, but the mountains of Judea, were hallowed by his prayers. The Sea of Galilee was a little basin: Jesus sailed over it, and wrought works of mercy upon its waters and by its shores; and it swelled into a magnitude beyond lakes and oceans. Gethsemane was only a spot, "so called:" the sweat of Christ's sacred sorrow fell upon it, and all earth's gardens beside cannot approach its ever-green renown. Calvary was but a low, hardly distinguishable summit, and Golgotha "the place of a skull:" his precious blood ran down there, and they overtop Ararat and Andes in the admiration

of the world. Truly, the place where the Son of God stood or hung was "holy." Though vile feet had trodden it, and bloody hands of sin had lifted him up; and treachery was near, and shouts of wicked vengeance rent the air; and "the potter's field to bury strangers in," purchased with the price of his betrayal, was hard by, — it was still holy, hallowed by his tears and groans, his godlike patience, dying requests, and divine submission.

There is no place in our most familiar knowledge, which association and the great providential events of life may not solemnize and endear unspeakably. A house is built for a common dwelling. While nothing but the supply of outward wants, or the ordinary and pleasant intercourse of domestic greetings, has transpired within, it still lacks the strongest tie of local interest upon us, though all the burnish of novelty and the last touches of art gleam from its chambers and doors. But let God come, as really as though in a "burning bush," to visit, with mighty joy or sorrow, the affections which, as yet ignorant of their own strength, abide and slumber there; and the place shall no longer seem to show the hand of the cunning artificer that built or adorned it, but shall become holy. Let painful sickness come, an angel of the Lord, as truly as that appearing to the prophet, bringing at last death in its train; and how is the room, which as a king he has entered, hallowed as the gate of heaven! Yes: the spot where one

dear to us has lain and languished in disease, yet patiently borne the Father's hand; where we have seen the thin fingers clasped, and the silent lips move in supplication; and witnessed that last willing struggle, which is but the spirit's effort to leave its fetters, and ascend the skies, — oh! that spot needs no set dedication, or touch of priestly hand, to make it for ever holy. So, if, in what we specially call the house of God, peace and consolation have reached us; if light has fallen from it upon the ways of Providence; or if in it the alarming trump of duty has been blown in our ears, by no mechanical or superstitious respect, but a real veneration, — shall it be to us “holy ground.”

Nay, the whole sphere of influence, through which we have with fidelity moved and toiled, shall receive continual influence from us, even in our own stillness and retirement; as, after the little insect has faithfully, according to the law in its instinct which its Maker gave, woven its broad web, it has only to stand at the centre to make every thread tremble. When John, in the Revelation, beheld the heavenly Jerusalem, he “saw no temple therein.” All, wide as the presence of God and the Lamb, was temple. So, in the same pure and sanctifying presence, let all on earth be temple to us, the place where we stand “holy ground;” and then, as the old court of the Gentiles joined to the house of God, this world shall be the entrance of an eternal sanctuary.

DISCOURSE XVII.

CHRIST'S NEW ORDER OF NOBILITY.

Acts xvii. 11. — THESE WERE MORE NOBLE THAN THOSE IN THESSALONICA, IN THAT THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND.

NOBILITY of rank, a thing so much thought of in all the world, was especially a point of pride with the Jews; even the poorest Israelite in the synagogue, to use the language of one of their writers, being held a gentleman by birth. The declaration, then, that the Bereans showed more nobleness in giving Christianity a hearing than the Thessalonians in driving its preachers away, would go at once to the heart. Moreover, this feeling of national and personal dignity could have been nowhere more sensitive and jealously alive than in such places as Thessalonica and Berea, having a mixed population of rival races, — Jews, Greeks, and Romans, — defying each other to a comparison of the degrees of honor: the Roman, from the Tiber, holding forth his proud scale of aristocracy running up from the centurion to Cæsar; his Grecian competitor, emigrant from Athens or Corinth, talking of the kings

and archons of an elder glory; while the Hebrew, advancing with a still superior pretension, might trace even further back his divine genealogy, on the line of priests, inspired prophets, and patriarchs. But then, in the midst of all, came upon the stage the Christian teacher, affirming that, to Greek and Roman and Jew, a yet finer nobility was offered than to be of princely dynasty, of the imperial court, or of the seed of Abraham.

In fact, among other things, in the vast revolution which he proposed in human affairs, Christ had brought in a new order of nobility. He had come to show that the highest nobility lay not in the length to which one could follow the stream of his blood, not in any height of peculiar privilege or providential favor to his ancestry; neither in the military prowess, which, in earlier or later times, enabled the armed and mounted warrior to ride or trample down the disesteemed crowd; but in the grandeur of private faith and moral principle, beneath the helmet and within the breast. This excelled every thing beside, whether symbolized in sacred insignia, or by the plume and spear and mail of battle.

When the Thessalonians, then, were so haughty and angry to defend their own opinions that they raised a mob to expel Paul and Silas, it was in this new Christian order of nobleness that they proved themselves wanting, and inferior to the Bereans, who had the candor patiently to listen and fairly to judge.

The writer emphasizes the fact, that many of the Jews and "honorable" Grecian women and men heard and believed. If the question were of nobility, he boldly affirms that the noble thing was to be a Christian, to attend to the evidence of the new religion, and accept its just conclusions. The sense becomes more striking in the true translation of the original word, which literally means better born. The Christian advocate searches to the root of the matter, and transfers the distinction of birth itself from the branches of every family-tree in which it had lodged. There was a birth better than that of prince or emperor, levite or elder. It was the new birth or regeneration of the spirit. There was a higher glory than the accidental circumstance that put a crown upon the head, or placed a censer in the hand and drew a sacred robe over the person. It was that inward anointing of the Holy Ghost which made of men, kings and priests unto God. It was that spiritual unfolding into the life of goodness, Jesus talked of to Nicodemus, which clad the soul in humility before God, and squared the conduct to the golden rule with one's neighbor. It was indeed a birth, a new and second birth, after that of tribe or station, and out of the first passions and inclinations of nature, into those dispositions of worship, justice, and holiness, which were better signs of high-born dignity than all the marks of caste and all the blazonry of heralds. So befitting the eternal truth, as it lay in the mind of God, was it that

among the disputers on points of earthly precedence should come the heavenly messenger, and cry, "Ho! all ye Greeks and Romans and Jews, and whosoever else may set up and pride himself against another on the ground of his name and lineage, strive no longer about this poor and antiquated kind of superiority. The very terms of the conflict are false, and its old basis rotten and decayed. Seek the new style of honor which will stand when every ensign of earthly nobility, like banners in a funeral-march, shall be reversed to the grave:

This new order of nobility in Christ is no separate and arbitrary thing in his gospel, but involved in that whole revelation of immortal justice which he made, and implying consequences as endless as its origin is holy and great. As, in the days of chivalry, the coat-of-arms was torn from the back of him who had falsely assumed it; so how many of the signs of worth, now counted genuine, shall at length be no more allowed! Sceptre and crown shall be evened with scythe and spade, and the characters alone of those that wore or wielded them will be considered. There shall be no question, at the final bar, of the first-born under the roof-tree, or of the sex to be lifted into regal power, or of the particular thread by which one may as a point of pride tenaciously hold in the complicated tracery of human descent; but only of the birth and growth of purity, worship, and benevolence in any human breast.

This was surely a new order of nobility, of an altered stamp, and with other than the ancient qualities. The characteristic of the noble or lord, however in different lands or ages he might be denominated, presented him as overweening and haughty, careful of his worldly honor and reputation among men, quick in quarrel, terribly to resent and avenge all insult and injury, to humiliate his adversary, to be implacable save at the price of the most abject apologies, and often appeased only with blood. Of these traits the ancient shields bore the emblems—which through rust the antiquary has spelled out—in figures of fierce animals pictured, the lion and leopard, in the engraving of clenched and threatening hands, and the inscription of every variety of warning and vindictive mottoes. How diverse the tokens and records of the Christian nobility in the consecrated shapes of the lamb and the dove, in the open palm of charity, in the budding branch of concord, or the beaming aspect of good-will, with no hiding mask or menacing visor; the commands of God on the tables of the heart, instead of the devices of wrath and cunning in armorial bearings; no sword but the spirit, no shield but faith, no helmet but salvation, no breastplate but righteousness, or girdle but truth, or sandals but peace! Or if, in this imperfect and evil world, the old weapons must ever again, on inevitable occasion, in their bloody work be lifted, it will be done by the new and Christian nobility only in that

extremity of need for which no calculation is equal, but for which the instinct of goodness and equity, by the great Father inspired in the human soul, will provide. As, in the severer turns of God's own administration, there is what is called his strange work; so, if the children of God and the followers of Christ can ever be truly moved to deeds of chastisement and resistance, these will be their strangest and most reluctant dealing; no merely personal quarrel, but maintained with solemn appeal to the Most High, performed in the way of sacrifice, as an offering, through what is right in human statutes, to the holiness of God's law and providence in the world,—laid on the bloody altar which patriotism, humanity, and religion, driven by sad necessity, yet with united hands, must sometimes mournfully build,—and returned from with eager speed, to the milder attributes and actions, which, as their Master's familiar clothing, it suits them daily to wear.

Indeed a new order of nobility, on whose unlimited gradations the humblest may ascend! Would that the old order had even yet given place! But the humility, meekness, long-suffering, and forgiveness of Christ and his disciples, so far from being generally practised, are not universally recognized as the essentials of nobleness. Many seem to estimate them rather as base, and cling to the heathen irritableness and retaliation, to the barbarian insolence and scorn, as what may become

a man. They may signify these things no longer in the once constantly worn instruments of offence; yet faces flushed with passion, and tongues sharp with envy, malice, and hate, are a surer token than the sheathed or shining dagger. But for grandeur and courage, as well as sweetness and tenderness, the Christian spirit of self-denial and humanity soars above that of personal consequence and vain glory. It requires a stouter heart to disclaim the low standards of society, and be brave against the dread laugh of one's companions, than to stoop like the falcon on an enemy, or contend loudly with bitter words. Our religion has told us of many a harder, and peradventure grander, thing than to face the cannon's mouth. Beyond the decree of knighthood in any aristocracy, it stamps for a nobleman him who, lord of lands or of himself only, is truth's servant and virtue's defender; champion of no system of feudal oppression or of modern slavery, but a peer with any in purity and equity.

Our religion, then, has come to ennoble us. It asks and aims only to do us honor. We have but to rise up to, and accept, the supreme dignities it bestows. But oftentimes a sentiment quite opposite to that of honor is connected with this religion in men's minds. The young and strong sometimes hold back from the Christian nurture and profession in a sort of shame. But such shame is itself disgrace, greater than the refusal, or, by misconduct,

loss of any grade in the old nobility ; as the copy of a moral excellence, like that of Christ, beyond a parallel outshines all the crests and quarterings of chivalry. Precarious, indeed, is the nobility that rests on external conditions and supports. The world has seen a monarch's throne burnt in the square of his own capital city, and a pope's tiara fugitive from the centre of his own temporal and spiritual domain ; and even now the mitres of England and Rome roughly dashed together, while civil ability and moral worth, with whatever checks and pauses, steadily prevail against the weight of all hereditary splendor. Not that it is the purpose of Providence, now or ever, in earth or heaven, to reduce the distinctions of men to that barren level, after which base envy and jealous ambition, with their wretched craving, hanker. But the purpose is to rectify and clear up those distinctions, according to the lines of a true scale of excellence. The purpose, no doubt, is to raise merit more and more into power, if not into conventional seats of power, for the blessing of mankind. The purpose is to make the righteous shine as the stars, differing from one another in glory, yet all together shedding the beneficent influence from which rises their renown.

Make haste, then, ye that loiter amid the blandishments of ease and pleasure ! The lustre of nobility is flying away from idleness and pomp, to light on the toils of the disinterested and humane. Ye

that tread the ways of wrong and violence, stop in your downward career! For honor is leaving the trophies of conquest, and gleams rarely on the heaps of the slain, but is swiftly glancing off to gild the monuments of philanthropy. It is resting less broad and pure upon the military aspirant, and inclining, with a holier effulgence, to the clean-handed hero that fights the battles of the injured and oppressed, and to the heroine that builds up over the land asylums for the poor and insane. Ye selfish ones! under whatever disguise of decorous and polished citizens you may proceed, turn your feet from the paths of personal aggrandizement and mere accumulation. For fast is coming the day when we shall be obliged to pick out the true nobility from their fellows of inferior note, not by aught in their clothing or fortune or circle, but by divisions of virtue brighter than were ever drawn in the heraldic steel and gold! They will present their armor of proof and their exalted bearing, not in the lists of some appointed tournament, but in demonstrations of magnanimity on the common occasions of life.

In a foreign court, one plainly-dressed ambassador, as he moved about among persons glittering with stars and crosses and various badges of honor, was remarked upon as being, in his simplicity, greatly distinguished. As this new order of Christian nobility is more widely instituted, no rich attire or costly appointments will stand for fame. No coat-of-arms, representing, it may be, in its forms

and colors, an ancient valor and integrity, — but only frowning, with a cold and silent irony of ridicule, upon him that boasts or sports it now, — will confer any claim to respect. The star will have to be, not gilt or painted, but wrought laboriously and forged with exalted achievement. The cross will be no ornament of fashion or ecclesiastic pretence, but a task done faithfully, or a trial borne meekly. The lines of genealogy will be in no old parchment or register, but in the countenance, — emulous of all ancestral loftiness, — that beams with benignity, and is furrowed with generous cares. A man's nobleness will be judged from a joy in uprightness and devotion, greater than in all that may please or excite him from abroad. His introduction will be in the sweetness of his manners. His pedigree will appear in the training of his children; and, could the seal be cut that should show him truly, the house of God, abodes of want and chambers of distress, as well as scenes of brightness and prosperity, would have the print of his steps.

But why predict, for a motive, these approaching changes of an amended social scale, when to every single spirit solemnly sounds a more sure and far-reaching prophecy from the mouth of Christ, averring that he shall sit on the throne of his glory, and gather to him all nations, not to abolish every difference among men, and make one, at last, indiscriminately equal to another; but rather to assert and carry out the real distinction of ignominy and

celestial fame, in the sight of angels and God, between those who do and those who do not the divine will, — between the self-seeking, slothful, and cruel, and those who minister to the hungry and thirsty, to the stranger and naked, to the sick and in prison ; accounting such service to the least as done unto him, its neglect the last discredit, its fulfilment endless praise.

Do we not hear a trumpet, more clear and stirring than ever, with brazen clang, summoned the ancient soldiery to conflict, or, with a silver note, proclaimed the Hebrew jubilee, calling us to no carnal warfare or congregation for festivity, but sounding from the world of spirits in the ear of every secret soul, inviting it to enlist among apostles' peers and Christ's nobles, to form the living body of his army, which, in the service of mankind, marches on to overcome evil with good. To the listening and obedient heart it is a strain of cheering though arousing melody ; but, even from the lips of Christ, it changes to the tone of threatening and cloudy alarm for all who refuse this following of righteousness to victories of love. Let it be our privilege, and the only elevation we seek, to fall into the ranks of this noble host, led by martyrs and confessors, with the great Witness, worthy Sufferer, and true Conqueror, at their head. Thus may we secure that appreciation which shall continue.

Whatever relative estimates of men and of qualities of character may now prevail and be accepted,

in how strong contrast must the nobility of heaven be with much of the so-called or miscalled nobility on earth? That nobility can have in its composition no proud bearing; nor can it own for its signal any trophy of brutal valor or cruel conquest, or of that victory by mere might, which is here sanctified by success, and passes for glory in the world. The stream of honor there can flow from no muddy source, nor become pure of original baseness by any devious length of its current. The divine insignia will be not of physical or passionate, but of moral and spiritual power. In the last court of honor, the highest awards will be for actions above that inferior fancy of our art, which establishes right by setting the foot of an archangel on the neck of a demon, or makes a seraph's sword to wave gleaming over a prostrate adversary. More conspicuous will be the tokens of that virtuous courage, which repels evil without a weapon; or, like Abdiel, turns with the rebuke of truth from the hosts of the ungodly. On the gala-days of earthly rejoicing, the old, smoky, torn, and crimsoned banners of war have sometimes been brought out for lofty exhibition amid assembled thousands. But other emblems will there be displayed, representing deeds of charity, achievements of patience, monuments of long-suffering; memorials, according to Christ's own test of nobleness, of life saved, and not destroyed. In the now incomprehensible change of body and place, of our whole organization and condition,

which shall be occasioned by death, the very possibility of many occupations, now counted honorable, truly so when honorably discharged, must pass away. That phrase in the Revelation, "there shall be no more sea," seems symbolic of such immense external alteration. The famous commerce of this globe, the world-wide operations of sale and barter, the use of riches, the sway of fashion, the imposing splendor of civil or military costume, the present material objects of human desire, with their pursuit through the windings of art or by the shock of arms, will, through the entire world of spirits, cease. They only, in this vast revolution, will escape without loss, who through each vocation have pursued worthy ends. They only will be the noble, who shall have done the deeds which Jesus enumerated; or can lead in their hands, redeemed by their care, the humblest creature, the poorest unfortunate wanderer. Degrees of nobility will there be even in heaven. But the thrones there will be thrones not of regal birth, but of real excellence. Dominions and principalities and powers will mark the steps on the celestial ladder, that worship and sanctity and love ascend; and in many things, with many souls, it will be indeed seen, that by merely crossing the flood, for a new standard of judgment, the first has become last, and the last first. May God help us to abide that revisal, and new, eternal reckoning of nobility or shame!

DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE FORM OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE
CHRISTIAN MIRACLES.

Acts ii. 22. — JESUS OF NAZARETH, A MAN APPROVED OF GOD
AMONG YOU BY MIRACLES.

THERE is a distinction, not always regarded, between the *supernatural* and the *miraculous*. The former term expresses a kind of quality or action, of which the latter signifies a single variety. That is supernatural which is above the laws of nature, as observation can trace and science arrange them: accordingly, man himself is in part a supernatural being. All the higher action of his mind, his imaginative creation, the freedom of his will, and the appeal of his prayer, are, in the sense of exceeding any definable rules, supernatural; while equally so is God's answer to prayer, his forgiveness of sin, and the influence on the soul of his Holy Spirit. As mechanical power is superseded by what we call chemical, and chemical by vital, so is vital by spiritual or supernatural; the ascending series of forces carrying us to that whose manifestations we cannot regulate, put into any determinate process,



or certainly embrace in any nomenclature. It is not, however, the general subject which I propose now to discuss, but only to remark on a particular branch of it, or the form of the supernatural in the Christian miracles. Even on the theme thus limited, but still very large, I can now make only two or three suggestions as to the important offices which these miracles fulfil.

First, they do something to satisfy what may be called our natural longing for the supernatural. This, with some strange exceptions of peculiarly constituted, morally perverted, or logically sophisticated minds, all have felt. It possesses early the hearts of children, in their eagerness for wonderful stories. It appears in almost every form of religious belief and worship. It is manifest in the well-nigh universal impatience of the human soul to get beyond the region of fixed order and monotonous routine. Fair and beautiful as are the uniform shape and regular ongoings of the world, the heart is not content, till, in some way, it escapes from the dominion of its established statutes into the region of original divine activity, and immediate intercourse with the highest, ungovernable, and all-decreeing One. Our very frame is thus built on wonder, and presumes upon some supernatural disclosure. The very make of man's constitution is a signal for the expectation of it, and an argument, not in any case, but in some case, for its reality.

Yet, because superstition has sometimes fancied miracle, or imposture feigned it, there are those who, in the name of philosophy, would scout the very idea of any such thing, and class the New Testament narratives, and impregnable proofs of it, as no better than priestly frauds and old wives' fables. Philosophy! — pretending to chain the Almighty to his works, forbidding the Creator to interpose among his creatures, branding a fundamental tendency of man's nature as futile, and fixing the stigma of supercilious scorn on facts sustained by all the demonstrations that make history possible, — facts, moreover, whose very intent, while impressing the Omnipotent Hand on the human heart, is to break the otherwise boundless reign of superstition, and to save the human mind from those fictions and absurdities about the supernatural, into which it would otherwise hopelessly run.

For all experience proves, that something, solid or shadowy, in the shape of the supernatural, human nature must and will have. It craves this, and, without it, famishes. To this native appetite, the miracles of Christianity furnish the true and wholesome food. These miracles, being not merely strange signs and astounding portents, but as full of reason and goodness as they are of power, by their pure and lofty character nourish and edify the soul. They who are laboring to cut off these mighty deeds, and to rob the soul of the nutriment

they supply, would, by their success, only plunge it back into all the windy imaginations and poisonous falsehoods, after which, through each system of delusion, credulity ever hankered, and from which it is the Saviour's glory, by his bread of life, to redeem.

From what a bottomless gulf the hand of Christ hath thus plucked us ; over what an abyss of endless error, and devious abandonment to all vagary and deceit, we are, by the verities of his religion, safely suspended, is plain from the exposures of our own days, as well as the wanderings of past ages. The present time, of a somewhat rife skepticism respecting the Christian miracles, not alone among the ignorant, but with some men of intellectual claims, is singularly enough a time also for the setting up of every vulgar and trivial pretence of miraculous demonstrations. Some, unable to accept Christianity on account of its prodigies, seem to have opened their breast to the fullest admission of the ephemeral stories of preternatural power, and, by a backward way, to be coming round, through the amazement of modern discoveries, to an acceptance of the very religion which they had despised. It is curious, as a striking indication of the original and unalterable fashion of the human heart, to see the Babel tower of wisdom, so laboriously reared to heaven against God's word, shaking and tumbling, as a feather, before the breath of this marvellous rumor.

It is not time, and here is not place, to pass judgment on the reported facts, doubtless deserving investigation, and perhaps only involving some heretofore unknown law, from which this new supernatural faith has sprung. It may only, in this connection, occur to us to note their vast inferiority, in all dignity and worth, to the miracles which we receive with our religion. In what port of grandeur the deeds of Jesus Christ stand apart from the insignificance or triviality, from the malice or the trickery, of these fresh disclosures! Indeed, these latter, whether offered in the way of an amusement, with noises and motions at a neighboring door, or, under the imposing figure of a whole community, rising out of like assumptions, in a far-off territory of Utah, appear but as a tinsel surface and hollow foil to the solid glory and eternal splendor of those works of Jesus which have brought God and heaven into contact with the human soul. The comparison is nothing but contrast. Until the recent wonders shall fetch us some revelation of truth or moral power or spiritual excellence, or even earthly convenience and comfort; until science or poetry, virtue or earthly utility, are advanced by them; until the angelic visitations, which they would imply, become as precious as mortal and human influence, now at hand and everywhere within our reach; or some of the very personages called up act at least according to their former wisdom in the flesh, — we may

well, with pre-occupied attention, continue to feed our aspirations and rejoice our hopes with what is at once so much better and more available to our belief, in the sublime and gracious doings of him who was in all ways approved by God for the Redeemer of the world.

But, beside this healthful ministration to man's innate want of the supernatural, the Christian miracles perform another office of guarding the doctrine and morality of the gospel. Much scorn has been expressed at the idea of proving truth by any displays of power. Spiritual things, it is said, must be seen in their own light, and cannot be cleared up by material phenomena. The Christian advocate, however, does not suppose it is the design of the miracles to show the intrinsic credibleness or lay bare the ultimate basis of any intellectual propositions, but to seal and certify their origin. They do not so much establish the truth as defend it; and, like sentinels posted at a treasure-house, protect all the teachings and precepts with which they are connected. They repel the attacks of human speculation, coming without heavenly warrant; like vehicles of celestial make and strength, they carry all that the divine Instructor said along with them through the course of ages, suffering nothing to be lost from their strong and holy girdle; and, while with their sacred charge they marvellously move over the earth and down the track of time, they seem, as from a spirit's tongue, ever echoing forth

the declaration,— He that affirmed these principles, and enjoined these commands, had the witness of the Most High with him; the name of God is written on the instrument by which he conveys this wealth of knowledge; returning health and sense and reason are the strong and blessed tokens of his agency; and the image of a broken sepulchre is stamped in the seal of his signature.

We may, in our perversity, forsake the spiritual truth even as thus inclosed and proclaimed. We may choose to go in the ways of error. We may immerse ourselves in matter and material science, till God and heaven disappear; and nothing is left but the ground, with plants and animals, and man as the great animal, upon it. Nevertheless, from the fortifications constructed by an Omnipotent Hand, — wherein they are for ever safely entrenched, — shall be heard, in voucher and protest, these same grand monitions, of a personal Father, a present obligation, and a future account. They cannot, by terrestrial might, be torn from their strong cover: they cannot be dissipated by neglect, nor feloniously stolen away. Miraculous lines, stronger than squadrons of warlike array or than twelve legions of angels, are a guard around them. System after system of infidelity and corruption has risen and beat upon this environment of rock; but the celestial fortress, stronger than any rampart against the flood, withstands the deluge of worldly thought and passion; and a voice from it, as the voice of the Son of God,

still rises above the human tempest to declare to all the same everlasting principles : — Your Maker observes you, takes cognizance of your conduct, requires your obedience, stretches out paternal arms that the prodigal may come back to him, and reserves judgment for the impenitent.

Thus framed in adamant, as it were cemented with the stones of which the New Jerusalem is made, for their bulwark, these principles, in solemn adjuration and unceasing repetition, are uttered in our ears. Therefore is the volume of our faith one book, — its leaves not rent, its parts not separated and scattered upon the winds, — because of this unshaken and impenetrable defence. It is by some imagined that the truth and morality of the gospel are things of an undeniable quality, shining always in their own light, which nobody can dispute, which indeed have always been in the world, are old as the creation ; and therefore need no such defence. But the manifold schemes set up in these days, not among mere worldlings, but, under the name of benevolence and the color of social reform, obtaining from many so fond a hearing, appear in conclusive refutation of such a fancy, show very plainly that what is intrinsically certain and immovable may by human folly be gainsaid, and by the murky breath of human disputation made to tremble, even as the sun and stars will quiver in a passing smoke ; and thus signify how profoundly grateful and loud in our thanksgiving we should be, not only for

Christ's instructions, but for his miracles over his instructions placed on guard. Our debt to God is not only for his bestowment of the pearl of great price, but for his sure conservation, in a casket that cannot be broken, of what he has bestowed.

Once more, these extraordinary displays of power in the Christian miracles, to authenticate and hold for ever the messages of the divine mind and will, illustrate the enduring interest of God in his human children; and the crowning miracle of all, in the resurrection of Jesus, is a special assurance of our personal immortality. There is a general kind of immortality of truth and goodness, of which men sometimes speak, with no idea of an individual survival of the grave. It is an immortality in the future like that in the past; an immortality in which the drop of our existence — which has been for a moment insulated for such achievements of honor and promise — sinks back to the sea from which it rose; and we ourselves, after we are dead, subside to the condition we were in before we were born, — that unconscious state which David speaks of, when God saw his "unperfect substance." Such an immortality, for the human creature so unreal, has not seldom been represented in the speculations of those who cannot quite conceive that spiritual qualities should perish, or find their house in the grave; and yet have no distinct belief, that those in whom these qualities have for a passing moment been incarnated and enshrined, shall ever

transcend the floods of time, and plant their feet on the shores of eternity. But the immortality which Christ, by his resurrection, brings to light, is an actual immortality, which, in enjoyment, memory, self-possession, noble effort, and endless progress, God's faithful children shall have in themselves, and of which they shall be for ever sensible. Coming back the same, in character and appearance, that he was before he went, Jesus proved he was not lost in the vagueness and void of the spiritual world; but could come and go, cross and re-cross the stream, stoop under the arch of the grave, and still keep all that made him himself. This case of his own he applies to his followers. He ties their individual fate to his heavenly fortunes. Those prints of the nails, which he asked Thomas to verify, were not only the sign of his imperishable identity, but the demonstration of our own. To continue the same conscious being and will, this alone is immortality.

I know by some the wish of an eternal continuance is characterized as overweening vanity and the very acme of selfishness. What is the individual, they say, this little personality we are so proud of, that it should be preserved? I will not answer with the obvious suggestion, that it is the affections which, a thousand-fold more than any proud pretence or vain self-interest, inspire the great hope of enduring after the dissolution of the body. But, above this, nothing in the view of intelligence, or

to the common feeling of humanity, is more dear and holy than this very principle of personality. What an illustration of this we ourselves have had! We have seen, by virtue of it, a single man, destitute and uncultivated, a stranger, a fugitive, and a slave, becoming the centre of universal interest, the most conspicuous object in a nation; the character and course of statesmen and rulers judged of in reference to him; all the elements of morals, and truths of Christianity, canvassed in their bearing on him; the grounds of law, and basis of civilization, tried anew in the ascertainment of his rights; the terms of mutual regard, and esteem of long-tried friends, shaken, or put sharply to the test, in the tug of opinion respecting the disposition to be made of him, because he was by nature a person, and not a thing; and, in fine, fame blowing her trumpet all abroad about one, who, but for the touching of this question of his poor personality, would have lived the obscurest of the unknown, and, so far as the general regard is concerned, died as a bubble breaks in the air. Or, to show, by another striking instance, this general interest in the personal lot and enduring existence of a fellow-creature, let some adventurous navigator, with his crew, be missed upon the deep; let gloomy doubt gather about his condition, and over his life; and the concern for him, instead of diminishing by distance, and fading away with time, shall only wax and widen, till whole nations

shall be agitated with sympathy, and moved to laborious effort, and engaged in costly enterprise for his discovery. The benevolent soul of some stranger to him shall pour out treasure like water for his possible relief. Yea, though years may have passed away, and he peradventure be frozen into the dreadful birthplace of the iceberg, or wedged among the glaciers of the land, or the snowy tempest howl over his bones, with no earth for their burial,— successive fleets shall be dispatched into the shadow of the Pole, and, under the long darkness of the arctic night, to hunt for him surviving, or gather up his cold remains. Is not all this a sign of the depth, and a foreshadowing of the destiny, of that personal being, which, by Christ's resurrection, is assured in the hope of a limitless individual existence ?

Amid the uncertainties and continually hazardous liabilities of an ever-precarious and short-lived existence, the thought of what may be real in a future state ever haunts us. Our doom stands in a winning, yet, to our conscience, fearful glory before us. Ignorant how soon the voyage which we are on shall end, we can scarce fail, from our most busy entanglement, to cast our glance sometimes onward, peering over the horizon of this world. Well indeed is life, in our common speech, described as an ocean. All sudden perils and remediless disasters, as of the sea, are in our path. At any time, the fierce gusts may rise, and drive us to

some pitiless fate. In any hour, the lantern of our own wisdom may be quenched in blinding spray from the surges of conflicting human opinions, or the vapors of doubt may obscure our course. On the rocking billows, with the foundations of our bark ever trembling beneath us, shall we not hail the lamp of life shining out of the monument of our Lord's resurrection, and casting steady lustre from the farther coast of his heavenly ascension? As when the waves are up, and the rain descends, and the winds blow and beat, the orders of the pilot, who can guide through the storm and night, are more precious and important than all the strength and wealth and wisdom of the world; so is it with the directions of him who marks the way to eternal life over the great bewildering deep of our present so agitated and mysterious being. Through all the jeopardies of our mortal career, let us obey and follow our great Master, the captain of our salvation; and, exulting even in gloom and tribulation, steer to that haven of rescue and firm ground of boundless advancement, which he has revealed.

DISCOURSE XIX.

CHRISTIAN POSTURE OF THE PROBLEM OF
EVIL IN LIFE.

Job iii. 20. — WHEREFORE IS LIGHT GIVEN TO HIM THAT IS IN
MISERY, AND LIFE TO THE BITTER IN SOUL?

THIS question of universal intellectual and moral interest, as to the purpose of evil, — a question forced from Job by his own unhappy state, so vividly portrayed to us, — is a question which has always been raised by parallel ghastly facts in life, and remarkable records of human biography; which, were one to take a pencil in his hand to draw the pictures, he might sketch somewhat thus:

Here, under the sun, a figure moving slowly through the street, not from bodily weakness, but with the heavy weight of a bruised spirit. There, chronic illness sitting quietly in a close chamber, gazing out at the tide of happy activity in which it cannot mingle. One, as she rises and walks, holding her hand on her heart; for “the pitcher at the fountain” begins to fail, and can no more pour out the flood of energy to carry her through the rejoicing career for which youth seems made. An-

other, it may be an ardent soul, chained to linger through the debilities of paralysis; for "the golden bowl is broken," and he lies impotently conceiving the good ministries for which the spirit is willing, were not the flesh so weak.

Here is age, waxing low; poor and dim in all its decrepit senses and faculties; body and brain coldly refusing to serve the mind and will; for "the silver cord is loosed," and but slackly draws the corporeal load, dully wasting what would gladly be dropped. Yonder, childhood, blossom prematurely blighted, with crippled limbs and sallow cheek, glances round the live-long day at the hearth, the window, and the chair, instead of bounding with merry companions, so buoyant and jubilant, in their busy sports. Behold one, a fine nature, of singular talent and worth, on account of some outward circumstance unappreciated by the proud and showy world, scarcely earning bread by half-compensated drudgery, bearing the cross of general neglect. See another, an ambitious constitution of boundless aim and burning desire after excellence, as it rushes to its end, falling against the corners of the earth, recoiling from the limits of fate; like a wounded bird unable to soar through the heavens for which it was suited, and little fit to walk over the ground. Here is one pursued by cruel, unrelenting foes; and there, another misunderstood, injured, and wounded by the nearest kindred, that should be friends. Some, with a

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tough patience, maintain the march they have long felt to be severe, though "exceedingly glad when they can find the grave;" and others, with cowardly retreat, wait not till Providence shall make their couch in the dust, but quickly end the battle and the strife by leaping into their own tomb. So might one fill the gallery of his imagination with gloomy portraits: as, on a cloudy day, the sun turns into a blurred, feathery, smoky spot in the sky; so, mid such delineations, the light of life fades away.

And why is all this? I would not treat this interrogation of nature and the heart of man as impious and deserving no reply; or confess it incapable of being answered, with all the dark threads, sore passages, sad interruptions of felicity, and wretched prolongations of pain, which it presents.

Take the old instance itself in the text, of Job, with his heap of calamities, staggering, under the threefold burden of poverty, affliction, and disease, through the world. Why wert thou so visited, didst thou ask, O Job? Why but that, through thy momentary temptation to wonder and murmur, that beautiful patience and admirable piety of thine might be afterwards developed; and that thou mightest thus set up on the earth a school of patience and trust in God, where all the after-generations of men might study? Wherefore but that thy example of submission — believing, though thou couldst not see; and refusing to curse God,

though the oath was put on thy tongue — might spread from these gates of the East, through the commencing procession of human existence, over the globe? Ah! couldst thou have beheld from that land of Uz, where thy lot was cast, the poor and the old, the oppressed and the helpless, in many climes and languages, solitary slaves under the scourge, and moaning prisoners in their cells, turning over thy leaves to learn resignation, and confidence in the final award; and we, in these last days and these ends of the earth, going back to thy pages for sublimity and hope, — thou wouldst almost have wished to strike the plaintive and skeptical question out of the record.

Even so may we answer this old “why and wherefore” in our own experience. It were not graceful, in a world full of graves, where hoary-headed sorrow comes down to our door, through innumerable human dwellings, to make much ado of our particular vexation, and cry out to our fellow-creatures, “Lo! is there any sorrow like my sorrow?” — even were there no account to be given of its purpose. But, surveyed in the light of actual observation, a clear and blessed account is given of it indeed. For to what do we owe all that is soft, beautiful, and gentle in this rough, cross world, but to just such instances as we deplore? Ah! unhappy, I was going to say, is the house which has not felt such discipline; which has not had in it stooping age or wailing infancy, a sick-bed

or a coffin. It is in this pitiful and tender soil, watered with tears, that our souls grow. Kindly affections take root in the broken foundations of earthly pride and prosperity; and holy aspirations, like mosses and flowers amid the crumbling of ancient structures, grow greenly through and over the rents of life's ruins. At the spectacle of calamities, meekly and bravely borne, hearts melt, which might otherwise have been hard as a stone.

I go to see the child with lame and feeble feet, keeping her seat while the sun rises, describes his slow circle, and goes down; and, out of her pallid face and serene eyes, she smiles a smile of fortitude, till, in my own debt for courage and serenity, I know her situation is not providentially in vain for others or herself. For God has two handles by which he draws to him the vessel of his creature's spirit. The outer handle is pleasure, but the inner one is pain. And he makes even such a little one, under his handling, a missionary of his gospel, though she be held in the confinement of a few feet's space, a missionary as truly as he does him who sails over every sea, and travels through every land, with the errand of glad tidings, peace on earth, and good-will to men. I visit the paralytic sufferer; and, through his lips, as I stand by his side, flow the old hymns and long-wonted prayers, more affecting in the word that palsy makes difficult or renders indistinct.

Oh! wish not, even in a thought, to sweep out

of the world these broken remnants of mortal strength and hope, as though they were nothing but incumbrances, and to leave only the hale and hearty, like the vigorous oaks; as though they only should be exempt from having the axe laid at their root, who can accomplish ostentatious objects, and finish your stirring and powerful affairs. Those left aside from the hurry and noise of life, placed on the shelf of an infirm repose, till you may be surprised they are not released, but withheld from the reward in glory for which they are prepared, and doomed to drag out a useless existence, have of all others the best and choicest messages of heaven to convey. I see not how they could be spared, how we could get along and do without them. Their heart is an ever-ready altar of sacrifice; their presence, an oratory of prayer. They can bless better than did the patriarch, when he scattered all temporal bounties among his sons for a legacy. Not to vindicate the providence of God, which will vindicate itself, but to point out a most important duty in our own improvement, I take from them my theme. Wait and attend upon them; meditate on their lot, and understand what it has taught them; and you shall get a benediction which your houses and lands, and ships sailing from afar, cannot bring. Yea, the thriftiest of your concerns shall not yield you such revenue as you can draw from what may have seemed the barren stillness of their retirement, and from the inner working of their hearts. If your

object be not gain, but morality and virtue, think not your morality and virtue are secured best and only by tugging at the cords of your own resolutions, and, with the prick of your conscience, goading on your own reluctant and laboring will ; but rather, by giving yourself up to contemplate these grand operations of Providence chastening its children, subtly cultivating into spontaneous beauty the loveliest graces, to transfer them, if you will, a slip or a seed into your own bosom. For this field of woe, which unbelief is astonished at, is no Aceldama of blood or Golgotha of skeletons, but the garden of the Lord !

In those cases, rarer and harder it might seem of solution than the common ones of physical anguish, where the intellectual scheme is baffled, and the moral plan of life put back in defeat, and a tempestuous and vehement spirit, grasping at all good, attains to no smooth and sunny voyage across the sea of life, but rather only invites the storms of this world to close around and overwhelm it, like a rod burned in the lightning it courts, we may still ask, What does such a spirit but loudly prophesy of the immortality that must give it the sphere and accommodation it could not discover in the short reach of these tossing waves of time ?

For we do not want to fare so as to be willing, like an animal, to take up for ever with this world ; and there are two things that predict and make

necessary a future life. One is the sweet, perfect, saintly soul, going in faith through all suffering and opposition, and rising, above funereal sobs and lamentations, to clear, rich songs of thanks and praise; blessing God for his earth, and ripe for his heaven; streams of mercy flowing by its side, "eternal sunshine settling on its head;" — and the other is the struggling and unsuccessful navigator of this lower ocean, encountering the gale, having to put back from the course, or wrecked at last on the rocks and sands of misfortune. Oh! for that one, too, another bark must be provided to sail through other more pacific seas, with new opportunities and fresh chances for virtue and happiness in the unlimited universe of God. To the *why* respecting its adversities, we answer, Because food was wanted for the soul's undying hunger after better fortunes, — because it was not meant we should be so mean as to put up with the present as satisfying, but that all this world should appear to the soul as "a bed shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, and a covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." "Why and wherefore," but that we should learn from the Christian revelation the object of life, and be driven from vain reliances to pursue it betimes, instead of bewailing its neglect at the end?

Job's question, Why the light of human life is mixed with bitterness and misery, is answered, then, in the demonstration that we are indebted for what

is most valuable in temper, character, and hope, not alone to what is sunny and sweet, but to the shadow that hides our landscape, and the wormwood that dashes our cup. For the present let us not be anxious to know more. Let it suffice us, that by such a life the better nature in us is encouraged, and the death, too, that is certainly before us, made friendly and captivating. We are not merely reconciled to die, but derive a positive comfort from the thought and expectation; comfort that we shall be told at last, we need not go on any longer in this routine of toil, rowing perchance against the tide, withstanding the tempter, lifting the weight of care; but that the faithful pilgrim may be permitted to lay down his pack, and hear a voice calling out to him, "Friend! go up higher."

Why, do we ask, looking from the troubles and diseases in our dwellings up into the heavens, — why are the sick, the infirm, the old, with their shattered nerves and poor dim senses, among us? The answer is, that there is explanation enough of any thing when we can see its use; that they, of all others, are most useful and necessary — nay, even essential — to human virtue; and that the world could not dispense with them, or be at all a tender-hearted or moral world without them. If there is to be a conscription and parting with some for the common safety and good, better surrender part of the healthy and strong than all these feeble and withering forms. They add not directly to the

material wealth and visible production of the race. But none that till the field, or hoist the sail, or build the house or ship, or sink the shaft of the mine, do better service than they to their kind, in their spiritual wrestlings: with mute lips, full of mementoes and appeals more instructive than books, more thrilling than eloquence; with warning expression, showing us, as in the rush of this world's pleasure and vanity we need to perceive, our neighborhood to those narrow chambers Job so sublimely describes; and with hands, which they can scarcely lift from their pillow or their side, opening to our view, beyond gates of earthly ease and success, the doors of eternity.

DISCOURSE XX.

CHRISTIAN REPRESENTATION OF DEATH AS A
SLEEP.

Luke viii. 52. — SHE IS NOT DEAD, BUT SLEEPETH.

PERHAPS the most interesting of all questions that can be asked is, What is death? But, of all questions, this has most baffled the mind of man.

“What is this absorbs me quite;
Steals my senses, shuts my sight;
Drowns my spirit, draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?”

A human being is born into this world, moves about for a certain term with growing animation, gives signs in the body of an intelligent, spiritual power sparkling through the eye and sounding upon our ear; and then this waxing figure of life strangely wanes away, and becomes silent, inexpressive, and still. What is it? What has taken place? We say, Death. But what is death?

Jesus answers that it is sleep. And though, even in that solemn scene where the ruler's daughter lay a corpse, they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead; he proved his word that death was

sleep, to the astonishment of them all. It was an idea with some of the ancients, that sleep and death were sisters. The greatest poem of antiquity represents the lifeless form of a warrior as borne

“By Sleep and Death, two twins of winged race,
Of matchless swiftness, but of silent pace.”

But Jesus Christ, inspired of God to know more than sage or poet ever dreamed, declares that sleep and death are, in different shape, the same thing; and his understanding of a matter which our wit cannot fathom, we may well take as authority.

Death is a sleep. Then surely it is a blessing. For such sleep is; and if death be like that which “knits up the ravelled sleeve of care, the death of each day’s life;” which has swallowed up so much pain and misery and grief since the world began, and revived countless millions to new energy and joy and hope on the face of the world; — if death be actually but a sleep, — and so it is, for so Christ teaches, — then thank God for it: it is nothing save refreshment and a boon.

But let us be careful not to lose the truth of this consoling resemblance. Men have often spoken of death as a sleep, without holding to, but utterly losing, the meaning of this identity. Infidels and atheists have described death as an eternal sleep, absurdly thus violating the very metaphor they used; it not being the nature of sleep, that divine benediction on our fatigue and distress, to be eter-

nal. Sleep is not annihilation: so death is not annihilation. Sleep is a recreation of our energies, a renewal of our affections, the strengthening and sharpening of every ability for firmer service. Sleep is returning for awhile from self-possession into the immediate hand of God, and mysterious contact with his regenerating life, for a new influx, from the Fountain of being, into the very depths of our existence, of freshness and alacrity and force.

So death, then, Christ's account being true, is but the same vital reinvigoration. Men lose themselves as entirely in profound and perfect sleep as they do in death; the lids not trembling, though a light, in a robber's hand, is passed before them, — as though it were God's purpose to reconcile us to dying at last by the mimic death we die every night. Very deep indeed the evening slumber seems to sink into us. The busiest hands are passive and helpless, the most active will impotent, the mightiest mind weaker than infancy, the fiercest passions burned down and quenched into harmless embers. Adam is by Milton represented as thinking he was going to die when first going to sleep. Yet all the time there is no oppression on the springs of life, but only restoring of their elasticity. Light and cheering on the soul falls the irresistible stress, the incomparably mighty agency, of this amazing phenomenon. A wonderful finger penetrates into the subtlest complexity of our frame, passes over every part of "this

machine" which "is to" us, removes obstruction, repairs waste, magnetizes to new effort, and touches to finer issues. Marvellous mercy of God in the darkness, continuing his mercy that is in the light! But no more marvellous than, and not diverse from, his mercy in death. That rests, Christ tells us, equally light on the immortal spirit. That, too, injures not, but only mends, and exalts to new heights, its most delicate susceptibility and loftiest capacity.

Sleep, moreover, is but a short and passing experience. It leaves us when it has done its essential work of empowering and refitting us from the strain and weariness of the day. So death, again, is a very temporary, transient process, from which the spirit emerges bright for new endeavors and displays of excellence. It is a mistake, therefore, to say, as is common, that our fathers are asleep. They were asleep when they died. But brief was their sleeping, as is the quality of sleep to be. They are no longer asleep there in the dust, as they are too often described, lingering for literal trumpets and the bursting hillocks of the churchyard, but awake from the decay of time, alive out of the ashes of mortality, not entangled with earth, not under the tombstone; but long ago, from that little drowsiness we call death, lifted in sight of angels and in praise of God.

When the young die, long ere our tears cease to flow over them, long ere the grass and flowers

have time to adorn their graves, long ere our hearts stop yearning for the tender forms so dearly pressed to parental bosoms, they are gone,— for the slumbers of childhood are proverbially sweet and light,— and they wake quickly to the greeting of love, which heaven can give as well and better than earth. What picture more beautiful to charm the eye than the sleep of a child! How we stand in silent admiration and perfect ecstasy of joy over the cradle, and gratefully bless God for the image, so clear and full, of his beneficence to mortals! How we delight ourselves with the changes occasionally rippling over the calm and peaceful countenance,— some gentle parting of the lips, flush of pleasure, “angel’s whisper”! Well, when the sleep of death comes to release from the exhaustions of weariness and the pangs of disease; and tranquillity, like the night’s repose, settles upon all the tossing and restless torture of days or weeks, and there is

“Again a smile upon the face,
As though the soul had gotten grace;”

why should we not also render thanks to Him who, by the same ministration of sleep in another form, as our Master tells us, has unwound the chain of anguish with the mortal coil, to waken his offspring with blessed light and life in a celestial body?

May I say, that one of my earliest childish recol-

lections was the fear, not of death, but of sleep. I remember lying upon my bed resisting, and, in a kind of horror of the imagination, struggling against this then unwelcome phantom of sleep. The thought seemed to be of resigning consciousness and existence; in fact, of dying in all the sense that can be had of death. But that, which appeared terrible, came not malignant, but benign and gracious to close the eyes, and not extinguish but resuscitate the ignorant, worn-out creature for new sport and study. So the death, of which we are afraid, can lay no ban upon us. The unsubstantial ghost is nothing but in the benefaction it brings, the new gloss it shall put on our faculties, the keener edge on our desires, the greater alertness and pitch of a higher flight to our undying aspirations; as the winged creature, that has slept on the bough, more gladly scales and beats at dawn through the heavens.

How the spirit wakes from the sleep of death; how it rids itself of the garment of flesh; how soon it is extricated; in what vehicle it rises to its home; what quality of clothing it assumes, or new mode of activity it puts forth, — in other words, the precise working upon it of death, — we know not. But neither do we know the precise working upon it of sleep, and nobody can tell us; familiar as it is, occupying so many of every twenty-four hours, yet a fathomless mystery. But Christ says death is sleep; and we may believe him, and, with as trust-

ful serenity, go through the one mystery as the other. Faithful in life, and avoiding the character of those who, as the prophet denounces, shall wake to shame, then, according to the sacred verse, we may "dread the grave as little as our bed;" "after life's fitful fever, sleep well;" and, in the better alternative of the prophecy, wake to life everlasting.

Much has been said of the weakening of the powers of will and memory in old age. It is but the coming on of sleep. The slackened step of infirmity, the dozing of decrepitude, yielding at last, for a moment, to the slumber of death, shall rise, swift and watchful, in the eternal morning.

By this sameness or parallelism of sleep and death, which Christ uses in respect to the daughter of Jairus, and also of the decease of his friend Lazarus, he intends, in fine, to affirm, in the plainest words, the superficial nature of death; that it cannot pierce to the soul, cannot blast the capabilities of the thinking mind, of the loving heart, the resolving will, and the conscientious and worshipping spirit; that these shall escape its blight, defy its dart, soar above its dissolution; nay, be only quickened by its shock, and enlarged to wider soil and purer air, as their prison-walls are taken down.

What a consolation such teaching from one, who, as the heart of mankind more and more owns, knew, with surety beyond any other, whereof

he told ! While into the arms of death have sunk such a host of those honorable and dear to us, friends and kindred of earlier years ; of those who played with us by the fireside, whose looks beamed and voices rang happily, the companions in part of our journey ; of our guardians in the slippery ways of youth, or of those whom we, in our turn, have tended and led by the hand, hoping they would take, and more than make good, our place ; and meantime, as the frail members of surviving parents or children, all whose lines and features are so fondly written in the page of our eye and the book of the heart, lie open to manifold danger, — pain besieging them, fever and consumption lurking round, — in this condition to be able to say that the arms of death are but the arms of sleep, and to sing,

“ Asleep in Jesus ! peaceful rest,
Whose waking is supremely blest ! ”

oh ! it spreads comfort alike through the enclosures of the dead, and the abodes of the living. It lifts the pall ; rends the shroud ; rolls away the great stone ; renders soft the dying bed ; makes marble and granite, planted in the ground, point up ; brands broken columns and inverted torches as misrepresenting the dead ; and shows the heavy Egyptian sepulchre to be out of place in a Christian burial-ground.

Talk as we may of an independent consciousness, in our own individual breasts, of a future destiny,

amid the conflicting theories of death which philosophy has devised or superstition received, there is comforting assurance in such a voice as that of the Son of God, the purest that ever broke the waves of this sublunary atmosphere, as it sounds through all the fields of the gathered dust of human mortality, pronouncing this but the dropped vestment of vanishing slumbers; for well said that barbarian Briton chief, to whom Christianity was preached first in our mother-land, that "the life of man is like a bird fleeing from darkness into a lighted chamber, and then out into the darkness at the other side; and, if this religion can inform us whence and whither, it is worthy of our faith."

Let us, then, take into our creed, as an article from the Saviour's lips, that Death is a sleep! — a sleep speedily over for the disciple as it was for the Lord. Death is a sleep; and a quaint Christian writer wisely fancies that this life is but a sleep, compared with the intenser life to come; calling these his "drowsy days," and looking for the time when he shall

"Never
Sleep again, but wake for ever."

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light." Let us so live and watch, that, when we lie down to die, it shall be "as one that wraps the drapery of his couch about him."

DISCOURSE XXI.

WHAT THE CHRISTIAN HAS TO LIVE AND TO DIE FOR.

Philip. i. 21. — FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN.

IT is a reflection often made to enhance the brilliancy of some one's earthly prospects, or to aggravate grief in the event of one's death, "He had so much to live for." It might both moderate the boast and overbalance the sadness of this reflection, if we would consider also how much such a one had to die for. Paul had much to live for; but he thought also how much he had to die for. For his converts, yet nurslings in the Christian faith, he would live: to be with his Master, he would die. He would live to preach the gospel; but the better land glimmered down so clear and winning upon him, he could hardly decide. All Christians and believers in God must have something of the same divided feeling, and, like the apostle, be in a strait betwixt two.

Life and death, the two thoughts oftenest in our hearts, the two words oftenest on our lips; life here with us, and death there before us; life in some,

and death in others, dear to us, — this twofold relation is certainly most important to be adjusted, that our feeling may be right to the dead, and our conduct right to the surviving.

True religion does not disparage the present existence. Certainly, there is a vast deal here to live for. This world is not a great mistake. This world is not an ugly ruin. This world is not a mere heap of dust and ashes. This world is a noble and beautiful world, though it be a little planet and far-off satellite of the sun. And human life, if it be at all in the fear and love of God, is no empty or miserable thing, but an immense boon for which we can never be enough grateful. The order and plenty and riches around us; these happy days of golden light, that bear us through our coursing years; the nights of rest and safety in an Almighty hand; the endless harvests that hand plants for our hunger; the wells of water it unseals to our thirst, and the flowers it tenderly sprinkles over all to adorn our lot, — what should we do between whiles of our toil, nay, throughout our occupation, but sing an anthem and under-song of the heart for such gifts in our existence?

But that existence is better; that land is brighter; that world more beautiful; nature arrays herself there in finer charms. No blight comes, no pestilence wastes, no gloom absorbs half the hours, no storm beats, or tornado hurtles through the air. Beauty and sublimity are there, where they hunger

not, nor thirst any more with bodily craving; but feel loftier appetites, met with perpetual satisfactions. The pen of inspiration itself, striving to portray the wealth and gladness of that country, seems to tremble and stagger on the page, and can only stop to deck itself with all the brightest jewels of the mine, with jasper and sapphire and emerald, as emblems of what eye cannot see, or ear hear, or the heart of man conceive.

We have here how much to live for in our homes of love and happiness! and when one, the honored head of a household, or some branch of filial comfort, budding in parental eyes, is taken away, it seems like an ugly rent and chasm in the very substance of being. The beloved one seems hurried away from what pure fountains of refreshment!—the cup he was lifting fiercely dashed from his lips, and incalculable waste made of the means of enjoyment; as though, from fear or some strange, incomprehensible necessity, immense treasure had been left behind in a desert, or sunk in the sea.

But home, that thing, indeed, of such blessed meaning, does not belong all to earth. It does not exist in its best estate on earth. God's children, Christ's followers, do not leave it for ever behind when they go from earth. It only begins here to be perfected there; to have more and holier affection in it; more music sounding through its loftier rooms, in a clearer atmosphere, as its sundered members, one after another, re-assemble, with no shadows of

doubt to come and sit within its compass, no separations or divisions. This is not fondly loosing the reins of a human imagination. Jesus Christ assures us that heaven is home. We shall never quite get home, or know what home is, — what is purity, felicity, or mutual regard and devotion of all its loving parts, till we get there. Our dwellings here are but the cradles in which the infancy of home is rocked. There home will be matured, and be as much more splendid as the blossom is than the seed; accomplished in all that the domestic heart, beating in a mother's bosom, or back from a child's breast, could hope or wish. Have we a good home to live for? We have, if loyal, a better one to die for, and to live in for ever. The happy home, in which elders are honored and obeyed, and youth not provoked, but nurtured, and brethren and sisters dwell together in unity, — it is itself, in its highest glory, but an image and prediction of the family in heaven.

But, beyond immediate kindred, we live for the society of our fellow-beings in general. How large a part of human enjoyment and improvement is comprised in this privilege of society! What proverbially more melancholy drawback in the advantages of any place, than that it has no society! Especially in regard to those who seem specially fitted for society by nature, by a certain inborn sweetness and dignity suited to make others happy, and be themselves made happy, in a wide social intercourse, — sunny, smiling souls, — or who, by

the cultivation of their powers, can benefit, as well as please, any company,— what a sad blow and envious grudging of human welfare, it seems, to remove them from the circles which they decorate with their gracious manners, and ennoble by their pure and gentle words! All the companionship they are withdrawn from joins with the domestic hearth they sat by in bereavement and sorrow. Indeed, how much they had to live for!

But what, then, is it that they had to die for? For a society of wisdom and goodness, of flowing and genial fellowship, to which all the proudest, gay, and glittering assemblies of earth are but as the tinsel to the gold. Your lighted halls and splendid dresses and rapturous music and merry dances, voices ringing with glad laughter, faces wreathed in smiles and beaming with delight, are but the attempted beginning and poor prelude of that celestial harmony; as when a musician passes his hand over the strings, before commencing the tune which he will play by and by.

The faculty for social pleasure seems infinite in the nature of man. If one should essay the picture of a perfect state, would he not very likely commence with picking out the choicest companions he had known, those most able to thrill and gladden him with their benignant presence and sparkling wit, with the eloquence and melody of their utterance, and a share of the honey of wisdom from their hived experience? But what description of

earthly fact, or what expression of the heart's longing, can equal the reality that awaits God's lowly and obedient ones there? Select a thousand, or ten thousand, excellent, brilliant, refined as you please or can fancy; earnest and affectionate as Paul, loving and spiritual as John, devout as Fenelon, soaring and sublime in imagination and worship as Milton, humane as Howard and Clarkson, and pure and tender as all the noble women from Mary, the mother of Jesus, down. Then gather them into one city, safely compassed about in a pleasant habitation, to exchange tokens of regard and kind offices of friendship, and to train up young and innocent spirits in accordance with their own high converse; and you have perhaps the grandest portraiture of paradise that heart could wish. Yet you only try for, and fall short of, that real New Jerusalem, where meet the saints of all ages, with Christ himself, no longer an invisible spirit, but a personal form, a recognizable countenance and person, at their head.

Have they, then, who are cheered by society, or are its ornaments here, nothing to die for as well as to live for? We must die for that society. Death alone can introduce us. He is the solitary marshal and solemn leader of mortals to that troop.

What, in fine, would we live for? Would we live to learn of the being and character of Him who made us? This verily is the highest state-

ment. There could not be a grander object of existence.

“To know the Author of our frame,” —

• Him who wove this curious garment of flesh over this mysterious and undying spirit; to come into acquaintance and close communion with him,— oh! that must be the greatest elevation and utmost gladness of our nature. But how imperfectly here we know him! How he retires within, and disappears behind his works! How inadequate probably our present drowsy powers are for a nearer view! Some of the best men have complained of their inability to come closer to God. They go forward and backward, to the right and left, and do not find him; and they speak of the veil that here seems to be over his face, and the distance at which they are kept from him. But there is a more intimate union possible. There is a warmer embrace in his arms destined for his children. But we must die for it! and we have thus more to die for than we could have to live for,—

“Were we possessors of the earth,
And called the stars our own.”

One is cut down in the flower and prime of his youth; while another is taken like a shock of corn in his season. We confess the decease of the latter to be timely. But of the former we say, and sorrowfully exclaim, How much he had to live for!

And what was it he had to live for? To study the various branches of knowledge, and unfold his intellectual energies? Suppose, then, he is translated to deeper and finer disclosures of the creative strength and skill, with more room to pursue favorite sciences through the realms of matter and of mind; to look in perhaps among the wheels on which this sum of things is turning, and fathom the springs of motive in the Infinite Mind, — shall his original purpose fail? No! That which life began, death shall only further.

Would we live for duty and the divine service? Surely, what else should we live for?

“We would not breathe for worldly joy,
Nor to increase our worldly good;
Nor future days or powers employ,
To spread a sounding name abroad.”

But for what, then, save higher duty, and a purer service in heaven, do the faithful die?

Surely, it is not despising this life to celebrate the good and wise designs of God in death. Life at all, the sense of existence, in this material world, only breathing the sweet air, seeing the pure light, and beholding around God's happy creatures, is a ground of unspeakable gratitude. This body, with its motions and senses, is a marvellous instrument to express and to feed the soul. We might well choose to live for the sake of living in such a scene; like a child, with his ecstasy amid the birds

and bees and blossoms of spring; or a man, on some bright morning that shows him the world has not, with his rolling years and changing life, altered or grown old,—remembering and feeling, as though he had become a little one again, his childhood's ecstasy. But, when the decrepitude of years sinks into the frame, or early disease and infirmity seize it; when the eye grows dim, and the ear deaf, to earthly sights and sounds of beauty and comfort,—oh! then is there not far more to die than to live for? To live in the body is, then, for sickness and suffering; but to die, for a new spiritual body to mount up like eagles. Oh! how grateful I often think the departed spirit must be for this very thing to have been permitted by God to lay aside for ever “this frail and weary weed of mortality;” this load of clay, that has dragged it down to the bed of languishing, for that other body in which it shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint!

God, therefore, has not sent life for a blessing, and death for a curse; life for smiles, and death for bitter tears; life for bright robes and garlands, and death only for the black and heavy pall. If we knew both privileges, according to the real rank which they should hold in our minds, while grateful for this life, we should yet more magnify death. We should somewhat disrobe the glory of this terrestrial state, and go to put crown and laurel on his head, till the King of Terrors were clothed magnifi-

cently, and his dark antechamber more inviting than the courts of a palace. The last enemy would smile upon us as a friend. Joy would fly from many of her boasted haunts, to hover with grief over the grave; and we should feel that, if we have much to live for, we have incomparably more to die for.

But, in fine, one thing we must remember. All this is Paul's alternative, and the alternative of those like him; not that of the unfaithful and unchristian. If we be loyal to God and our fellow-creatures, whichever side in the scale of our destiny goes down, that bearing the fortunes of the present existence, or that laden with the fate of the other, can yield us only blessing. But, with the faithless and wicked, all is reversed. With the grand distinction of character,—the only distinction worth thinking of or naming,—the universe, time, eternity, as a very little thing, turns and changes. By wrong-doing, our small fingers can alter to us the whole huge world,—making life no satisfying minister, and death no gracious benefactor; the beauty of this lower sphere eclipsed, and gloom over the regions beyond; home not happy, and the heavenly home not real or accessible; society hostile, and no better society within reach; honor in the divine service not here known, or hereafter expected; the mortal life low, and so any immortal continuation of it visionary, or a cheap and doubtful boon. Nothing but keeping faith with God and

man transforms and glorifies the creation, makes the splendors of the better country shine through, along the valley of tears runs a path to the mansions where is no weeping, and turns the last door that shall open to us below into the entrance of life everlasting. Nothing but faithfulness reveals the solid, permanent quality of our being, shows it armed against the powers of fate, neither the sport of nature's elements, nor the prey of their destroying fury; not quenched in her watery floods, nor torn in the explosions of her vapor and fire; not withering under the touch of her decay, or expiring with the last breath of her sublunary air; but rising out of all corruption, overthrow, and ruin, with steady, undying pulse, into the atmosphere of immortality. While its neglected garb falls behind, the soul comes to know the blessedness into which it is led, from life through death; and finds that its object in living and dying was, by the just and unchangeable One, made eternally the same.

DISCOURSE XXII.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF HEAVEN AND HELL.

Matt. v. 20, 29. — EXCEPT YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL EXCEED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YE SHALL IN NO CASE ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. . . . IT IS PROFITABLE FOR THEE THAT ONE OF THY MEMBERS SHOULD PERISH, AND NOT THAT THY WHOLE BODY SHOULD BE CAST INTO HELL.

THE Christian doctrine of reward and retribution is not unfrequently put into the form of expression which is employed in our text. It is important to understand the meaning of the terms *heaven* and *hell*, as thus used. I propose to seek for this meaning, not by the method of any minute, critical investigation, but by setting forth, in their substantial force, the ideas which such language, in its earlier or later application, conveys to the mind.

Heaven is the lofty region of aspiration and love and hope; and hell, the base one of degradation and hate and fear. Such has been the natural thought of mankind in all ages. The pagan's notion of the spiritual was, however, involved in his erroneous conception of the material world as a boundless plain, in the regions below which, considered as alike infinite, and as through the grave alone accessible

to the departed spirit, room must be found not for a miserable Tartarus merely, but for the blessed Elysium too.

Science and the gospel, revealing the true constitution of the material and spiritual worlds, have strangely shortened this fathomless depth, and dispersed this unlimited gloom. Heaven is above, and hell is still below; but that which is above is now to the imagination vast, and that below is small. The dark profound of hell no more equally divides the creation with heaven, than Satan so divides it with God. Under color of an evangelic view, to consider hell as the hemisphere of all nature is to entertain a heathen faith contradictory both to the fact of God's work and to the goodness of his mind. No, thank the great Father! heaven is the high and broad and universally extending space; and hell, the mean and close and smothering. Heaven rises and soars over the antipodes as over our own heads; over the Indian as over the American clime; over turban and pagoda as over roof and spire: nor is there any quarter of the bending globe from which faithful souls — who, as the New Testament declares, in every nation serving God and working righteousness, are accepted of him — may not ascend to it; though hell is the equally open descent for all treachery and sin.

As the majestic sun starts out of the sea on his magnificent way, and traces his sublime, upward scope while he goes on filling the sky all round the

globe with his warming lustre, and makes every thing else underneath appear small; his rolling orb seems to point out the compass of that moral heaven, to which, as also to the caverns of hell, with double diverging bridge, this middle part of earth opens. Heaven is the vast, and hell the confined: such is the teaching and implication of Scripture. There are in heaven seats on seats and circles after circles, with choirs of juniors and elders, in successive range, with ranks and hosts, that no man can number, of angelic and archangelic excellence. But hell is never represented as containing such immense company, or large accommodation, or well-ordered and harmonious variety. There is the devil and his angels, with the many sinners from this world tempted down the broad way of destruction; and that is all, save a confusion in the night of wanderings and groans. Heaven is a word very frequently occurring in the Scriptures: hell is comparatively rare. Heaven is often by the inspired writers spoken of in fine exulting strains, as the great and glorious domain: hell is sadly referred to as out of the way, some pent-up abode of penalty and restraint. Heaven is the place of expansion and reach and growth, where there is endless room for all motion and increase; hell, a hold and prison, shutting in what belongs to it, in woful strictness, to dwindle and decay. Such is the idea suggested by Christ's parable, and specially by that valley of Hinnom, the very name of hell, which was but the

receptacle of all refuse, of whatever was to be left in neglect or burnt up.

But though heaven is so large, and hell so comparatively small, let it not be thought that my present purpose is to extol the splendors of the one, or to disparage the apprehensions and scare away the spectres of the other. I propose not to magnify the easiness of approach to the former, or to slight the imminent danger and impending terror of the latter. Nothing but virtue and purity, nothing but benevolence and humility, nothing but love of God and likeness to Christ, can grow and mount into heaven, big and glorious as it is: meantime all vice and folly, all impiety and malignity, all pride and vanity, must go down into the dungeon and the pit, however narrow. But the peculiarity in this Christian form of reward and retribution is, that it shows all the noble and worthy qualities as enlarging and preserving our being, and lifting it up into new measures of honor and durable joy; but sets forth all disloyalty as contracting the soul, letting down its stature, and consigning it at last, in a sort of mental consumption, poor and dim with fading consciousness, to hell, to waste away and perish with the dross and offscouring of the world.

Hell is thus not so much torment as loss. It has torment for a warning; but, the warning being refused, the torment leads to and ends in privation of happiness and extinction of power. Compared with the infinite heaven, it is indeed but a petty

cell, as the valley of Hinnom was to the huge swell of the earth. But let us not therefore imagine we can afford to smile at it or be inspired by it with no dread. It is large enough for our decay. There is room in it for death and annihilation of faculty. It has space to provide our souls a grave. It lacks not horrid chambers abundant to lodge all who wish to travel and take passage that way. If we let the spirit in us run into the excitement of unholy passions, into the ruin of falsehood and fraud, or into the slow and sure decline of selfishness; if the love of pleasure be suffered to infect us, or licentious profligacy to touch us with its plague; never doubt there will be verge enough in hell to receive and awfully secure us. A splendid palace goes down, in the fire, into a very little ashes; and dwelling and tower are by the stream swept out of human sight and admiration into irrecoverable wreck. In what small enclosures and imperceptible seclusions is the glory of the world buried! And ah! how miserably will your heart, if you expose it to every flame of ungodly rage and every disease of iniquitous habit, be trampled under foot and thrown carelessly away! and even the spiritual nature in you, with the costly structures that adorned the world, and the once proud, gay flesh of a hundred generations, sink and disappear.

Then despise ye not, neither mock at, the strength and grasp of hell, though it be of such inferior dimensions to the mansions of heaven. Let it be

no subject of thoughtless laughter and fearless ridicule, reduced, as it may be, from the portentous size which it once occupied in men's fancy, to a miserable keep of offenders and rebels, in a corner of the lordly castle of the world; or transformed from a furnace or wheel of everlasting, immitigable torture, to a spot of mouldering and nothingness; or appearing as the conflagration of abused abilities, shooting up but to cease. Think not lightly of a hell like this, even if you believe some germ of immortality will survive out of it unconsumed, or though you be convinced that God will finally rescue all his offspring into blessedness. To one aware of his relation to God; of his capacity for holiness, and limitless spiritual unfolding; of the individual or social destiny of the just and true and loving, — what idea can be more frightful than the blasting and failure of all this, through sloth and disobedience, into cold forgetfulness! From what could a discerning spirit more convulsively shrink than from this fearful plunge into the drowning waters, to let the Lethe of oblivion pass over all its finer feelings; or from the creeping of this deadly sleep, as over the traveller through the snows, to fasten on every gracious affection; and then to live on, if life continue, in dispossession of inward birthright, under a stupefying stricture of reason and the heart, with the mark of diabolic seizure upon the richest revenue of the soul, deprived of the privileges of love and worship and

- holiness, bereft of what is manly, and kept a stranger to all that is divine; half — and oh! that far the better half — of our real property alienated, fenced off, and blotted out! Does anybody want
- a more dreadful idea of hell than that? From that will not every one flee for his life?

Hell is regarded as something future. Ah! if we are transgressors of the law; if we have given up the reins to inclination, or sunk into the rut of evil habit; if we have become plotters against the rights of others, or the prey of our own senses and appetites, — we shall hardly have to wait for the revelations of another world to know what hell is. The dulling of our perceptions, the diminishing of our vitality, the weakening of our judgment, the beating back of every aspiration after good, and the eclipse of every intuition of celestial honor and bliss; in fine, the limitation and lowering to destruction of our very nature; the blindness and deafness and insensibility of our soul, — that is hell; nor could there be any other so awful.

To this terrific power we can fix no limitation in time, any more than we give a precise definition of its place. It began when and where, beyond our knowledge, sin began: it can end only when and where iniquity shall end. So indefinitely, in the oracles of our faith, it is described by the word, which, with somewhat various and dubious sense, is translated *everlasting*. Everywhere, whensoever a soul violates the law of God, commences its havoc

and waste,—threatening, if the violation be persisted in, utter ruin. The Bible does not declare the interminable torture of any one now designable person, but wakens a fearful looking-for of judgment to come, and delivers over to despair the whole class and category of wickedness and the wicked. Hell is something for ever after sin, to smite and enfeeble and pull down its subject. It is the withering and collapse and combustion of the world; the undying worm whose food is in man's corruption, and the unquenchable fire whose fuel is the neglected, abused, and falling house of the soul. Its worst horribleness is not the pain of our compunction at guilt; for in all pain there is life and hope; but the mournful blankness and vacancy into which it wrestles down and quenches the noblest abilities and richest endowments. Whenever we are tempted, by self-indulgence or daring crime, to break the divine command, shall we not think of such a fate, and recoil?

Nay, shall we not more and rather think of the contrast to this in the development by virtue of all power and holy gladness, through which we may enter the opposite state? For, if hell is death, heaven is growth and life; and while there is room below for all to crumble that we are willing, in our madness and folly, to cast away; as it takes no extravagant space for the heap of weeds or the blasted and rusting harvest to fade and vanish, till the icy winds howl by, and we know not where it is; so

there is room above, in the many-mansioned place, for all good qualities to expand and flourish. No death of the body shall ever claim them, too, for its portion. They shall ascend to heaven out of the ruin of the fleshly covering, and beyond the cell and pressure of the tomb. For grandly has the Lord laid out his garden in the universe; broad and magnificent, the plantation into which he shall transfer every seed of excellence to root and spring for ever: only the barren, unfruitful shall be left without the gate to perish.

Christ tells us only a real righteousness shall thus be permitted to survive and endure, — a righteousness exceeding the poor pretence thereof in the Scribes and Pharisees. It must be sincere and earnest piety and humanity, genuine lowliness and purity, unaffected meekness and sobriety. Nothing that looks like these things in the eyes of men can be accepted for the heavenly culture and training, unless it be also true in the sight of God. We cannot, by taking thought, add one cubit to our stature, or turn one hair of our head black or white. But we can exalt and widen the proportions of our inward being. We can make our gray head a crown of glory, if we do not make it a badge of shame. Our youth, obedient to the Creator, can gain that wisdom which is the gray hair to man, and show that unspotted life which is all that is desirable in old age. For the sake of our darling sin, to retain and indulge our evil members, we can

let our whole body, all our manhood, go down into hell ; or, by our faithful nurture of every part of this wondrous frame which God has given us, we can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But perhaps these Christian views of heaven and hell, as expressing the reward and retribution attendant on the diverse characters and deeds of men, may be made more clear by adducing some confirmatory illustrations from that divine Providence, which unfolds its results in our own experience.

We see one of these in the difference between the pains and afflictions laid on us by the hand of God, and those incurred by our own sin and folly. It may please him to scourge us sorely for our good, to take away what is dearest to our heart, or to rain horrible plagues of disease on our bare head ; but if, in all this, we can see but the wise appointment of our Father to perfect our nature, and raise us up to ever-new degrees of holiness, by the discipline with which he exercises even the innocent and the righteous, we can stand amid our agonies with a certain exquisite and exulting gladness of spirit. With mournful dignity and a grand submission, we yield to the Power that deals with us in anguish, and means thereby a blessing. But if, with the high hand of our own impiety and presumption, we have plucked down the ruin upon ourselves ; if our evil temper and ill manners have exposed us to danger and woe, and our offences or negligences pierced us through with

many sorrows, — ah! there is no such salve for their smarting, nor any such Almighty arm to help us to bear the load. A man, for example, may have some natural weakness, some constitutional and hereditary taint of body, which presses him down with a burden of debility; leads him to seek many physicians, and try continually new and vain remedies; or lacerates him with distress, and drives him over land and sea, the slave and follower of the journeying sun, into other climes, in weary quest of relief. But what a marvellous and measureless satisfaction he carries with him in being able to say, “It is God’s will; I brought it not wittingly on myself by the violation of his law”! What a wall of enormous boundary, in feeling and condition, separates him from the man who is constrained in his secret mind to acknowledge that his own guilty fingers scattered the baleful seed that has come to such blossoming; and the reaper was the planter, too, of the fruit! Oh! that alone deserves the name of wretchedness, to know, in our groaning, that it is but our intemperance or violence that is making us a visit; that our self-indulgence, putting on another dress, has become self-destruction; that the curse has returned to the blasphemer, the chalice to him that poisoned it, and he that took the sword perishes with the sword. Yes: to feel that our youthful cheek is thin and pale, not with any disinterested daily or midnight devotion, but in the watches of unlawful gratification; to

look and see that our gray hairs are no tokens of long toil in the service of God, but have grown out of the soil we have made, the morass of our sloth, or the gullies of our excess; that our eyes are dim, not with noble study, but with base sensuality; that our hand is tremulous, not from being so often nerved with generous emotions, but trampled and shaken with mean desires; that, like the building struck with lightning, and torn open to decay, or ruined with damp rot, so passion has smitten, or vice eaten into us, thus to infect the whole structure of our being with corruption, or carry it down into miserable lapse, — this, indeed, is hell on earth: while he whom God chastens, or a mortal foe pursues, may, like Stephen, look up into heaven, and see the divine glory.

Sickness is a different thing, sorrow is a different thing, death is a different thing, according as it comes in the companionship of virtue or in fellowship with guilt. To have a good child, whom we have trained to goodness, removed into the eternal world, is not such a grief as to have a bad, neglected one removed. To be pale and sad at God's doing is different from blushing with disgrace at our own. In the chamber of mourning to stand up in honor and purity over the dead is different from rising in a burning shame that seems to touch the coffin and penetrate to the ashes within. Wonder not at such instances. We have in this matter no election where or when we will contemplate these opposite

issues from the grand alternative of righteousness and guilt. The law of retribution is no delicate and shrinking thing, that respects our privacies, or retires from our solemnities, or will hold any time or place sacred from its ever-legitimate intrusion. It can glorify the dust which was associated only with cleanness and honor while it throbbed; and it can make the cold corpse but a white monument of iniquity, from which we shrink in aversion, even while the cords of nature draw us toward it; because it bears, oh! no such blameless stigmas as those in the hands and feet of the blessed One or in the features of his followers, but only some stamp of hollow-eyed wastefulness, or flush of extravagant rage.

That same law, like a king erecting a banner on the territory he has discovered for his own, claims the graveyard, too, for its possession. As one walks through the aisles in its green solitude, how the names of the good and worthy shine on the marble! They need no epitaph, no smoothly flowing line of poetic praise, no delicate skill of art in the upward-pointing finger, or sculptured torch flaming to the skies. Involuntarily the reader of the inscription lifts his eye to seek them above. He cannot see their virtues buried and pressed down where the grass finds its root; but, with irresistible impulse of spirit, soars after them into the regions of bliss: while, to his inward hearkening, voices of assurance from that upper sphere mix

with the soft breathing of the winds and the mellow note of the trees, telling him of life and peace and progress and sweeter harmonies there, of which all earth's music is but an echo. But other names are written on those tablets of stone, which do not so mount and overcome the heap of surrounding material decay. They seem rather to signify what is overlaid, kept underneath, and gloomily hidden in the ground. All that heretofore appertained to them appears only as poor, shrunken, and withered. As sometimes with the chests that robbers and midnight plunderers have essayed to heave above the surface of the sepulchre, so is this mortal weight too dead to lift into the air of heavenly life and illumination; or whatever naked and trembling spirit, whatever thin exhausted shade, may strive to wing its way thence to immortality, leaves how much former strength and faculty behind, stripped off by guilt to perish! They rest indeed in the power and mercy of God to take them whither he will. But their "proper motion" is not to rise, nor does descent appear to them "adverse."

Again, if we look purely within the mind, we notice the same contrast of character and fate. Memory is as different as is death and judgment to the faithless and to the loyal. To a soul unstained and upright within the bosom, what bright vistas open of retrospection, down which its glance roves, and returns with ever-fresh delight! How

memory, as in some vessel of miraculous shape and ethereal lightness, floats it swiftly through all its life, and feasts it richly with immortal food of its own deeds done rightly, words spoken truly, tokens of love shown generously, and achievements of courage rising, on occasion of need, into heroism! — a divine experience, the antepast which saints have celebrated of heaven! But how differently does memory convey and handle the unfaithful! To the man she brings up the child that he was, but has so corrupted and perverted. Dreadfully she rebukes him with the surrender of his innocence, and displays to him the fine instruments that were in his nature given, but are now so miserably gapped and broken. If he goes to the spot of his birthplace, or walks in the pasture, where, before moral error began, his young feet used to wander, memory, like an invisible giant, irresistibly wrestles with him. She casts him upon the ground, and wrings from his very heart the cry, — “Oh that my innocence might come back to me! O God! that I might be pure and guileless again as I was!” She leads him into the solemn enclosure familiar to his infancy, holds him down to spell out the titles of those he once sojourned with, and points to the divided directions that meet at the turn of his own repentance or persevering sin.

For, finally, this contrast of character and fate is not only around and within, but also before us. This is the sum and climax, the glorious yet fear-

ful gift of revelation, in the assurance that we, who have worn this material garb, are not to be confounded with matter at last, but rescued from all its decay, for a future destiny corresponding to our character.

Being lately in a region distant from any church, I went, one bright Sabbath morning, to the top of a hill, to see the works of God, and listen to religious reading. As I sat on a lonely hillock, that offered itself near by, the beauty and mystery of the world took hold of me. The strange life of man, and his questionable fate, added their doubtful complexion to the living splendors of the day, and mixed with my delicious enjoyment a dull pain. My mind ran off to mystic absorption in the everlasting magnificent flux of things from pole to pole, — of light and darkness, action or rest; and somewhat mournfully queried of its own entanglement in this wonderful process, this mysterious texture, so woven and unravelled, of creation with my own existence. While I reclined in the cooling breeze and the pleasant sunlight, with the wide forest below, and the restless, dashing, moaning ocean filling nearly all the horizon about, an echo through the air, from a far-off tower, took off my attention from all other sights or sounds. It was the toll of a bell summoning the people to worship. It roused me from the deep, imaginative repose amid the forms and hues of all this well-proportioned grandeur around, into

which my soul had sunk. Ah! this is the solving of the question; this the divine announcement of a coming existence beyond this globe, and dress of clay! Yea, verily, I could not help exclaiming, well may the bells be rung for the promise, on God's word, of any release for the soul from this infatuating bewilderment in nature, and any path discovered ascending out of her wasting fields and desert sands, into a permanent land of life and happiness. Such disclosure from heaven should boom out and reverberate over the earth, upon all the winds, to every mortal ear. But, while I listened, the note, swept from the swinging wheel, seemed to change: some sadness mingled with the cheerful and gladsome tone, making it a note of warning and alarm, too, as though it proclaimed to the children of men, not only this rising way of honor to blessed renown, but for the disobedient a descending one, also, of darkness to discredit and eternal decay! So is it, according to the truth of the Bible, in our choice.

But the more frequent mention and fond celebration, in Scripture, of the heavenly world, allow us, in fine, to leave this painful contrast, and fix our thoughts on that region of hope which is not only to be entered at last by the faithful, but sends down the shining of its distant light and glory upon their earthly pilgrimage. The gospel is a ministration to human suffering as well as human sin; and, while portraying the consequences of

wrong-doing, it has many a gentle and comforting word to those clad in "this frail and weary weed of mortality," striving to do God's will. It invites them to pause awhile on their way; to wipe the dust from their sandals; to lift up their stooping heads, and behold afar the peace and splendor of the New Jerusalem towards which they are traveling. Man will go through the brazen sky of the burning zone, or tempt the iron rigors of the polar air, to discover some arctic strait or unclaimed island, calling hardship pleasure, and want luxury, if wealth or honor be at the end. Look up, then, laborers and sufferers, according to God's will; and behold, beyond all heat and frost and calamity, a land of which every lower Canaan is but an emblem, and temples and palaces of stone only a shadow.

You may have felt how it comforts the eye, weary with the surrounding scene of conflict and perplexity, to look up from the turmoil of affairs in the murmuring street, away into the quiet depths and peaceful motions of the ever-serene and untroubled sky. So does it gladden the soul to turn from the disturbing evils which will vex the most favored lot, into that profound and tranquil retreat, where, their toils and pains being over, God gathers his true-hearted servants. There they are, above the reach of collision, the power of grief, the grasp of disease, and the sphere of uncertainty. The clouds that were round about God's thron

have passed by. His way is no longer in the sea, and his path in the great waters; but his footsteps are now known.

This is our hope. Much has been said of heaven here below; and the apostle declares "our conversation is in heaven." When faith is strong, conscience clear, and the love of God and all goodness warm in the breast, there is a foretaste of angelic joy. Some crumbs fall to earth of that bread which is eaten in the kingdom on high. But, while the veil of matter hangs over our sight, and the tabernacle of clay closes round our soul; while anguish pierces the body, and bereavement rends the heart, and the valley of the shadow of death stretches its dark boundary between our dwelling and those shining domains,—the most daring imagination cannot quite place us in heaven. We must not be impatient to find ourselves there, but willing to bear the sharp strokes by which God cuts away what is impure from our character, as he "maketh up his jewels." We must wait cheerfully the day of our deliverance, in the night of grief and the prison of confinement singing those songs which Paul and Silas sang, till the time of our release shall come.

But earth, at its best estate, is not heaven. Alas, if this scene of storm and disaster, where exposure is unceasing and every possession precarious, were all that is meant by heaven! When I think of heaven, that place where all obstructions to our

freedom shall be removed, and no effort exhaust the energy of our will; where our co-workers in every good design shall never be smitten down into senseless clay at our side; where, the clogs of this grosser organization being taken off, no cloud shall come over the reason of any whom we love; where our meaning shall be no more misunderstood, nor our motives misinterpreted, but some new powers of language convey them, or, no concealment being needed, they shall shine with immediate transparency; where we shall exercise the faculties of our minds without fatigue, and the affections of our hearts without disappointment, and our moral powers without sin, — while the gloomy oppressions of iniquity, that in this world overwhelm us from abroad, or rise up heavily out of our own bosom, shall roll away like clouds before the wind, leaving the unstained atmosphere of divine holiness and goodness to spread all around, and brace every purpose and right endeavor, — I feel that heaven is something infinitely above all that this sphere of sense can show; and I bless God, in the humility of thanksgiving unspeakable, for holding out on high to our expectancy compensations so undeserved, and merciful gratuities so glorious. Ye sick! your spirit shall not for ever strive with flagging organs, nor your strength be spent on decrepit members. Heaven is before you, the end of your pious endurance; and the sorer your struggle, the nearer is it at hand. Ye sorrowful! bear the

burden on your heart: you will not have it to bear far. The grave is never very distant. The angel of peace will light before you but the more welcome for her tarrying, and your heaven be sweeter for every pang of earth. Mourn not, disconsolate over the early dead! Is not the innocent soul in heaven? Lament not for the just, ripe here, and there made perfect. At the approach of your spirit's trial, in the hour of your bodily distress, in every hard and perilous juncture of existence, be true to God, and look for the great light above.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

THE CHRISTIAN DEFINITION OF IMMORTALITY.

1 Cor. xv. 53. — THIS MORTAL MUST PUT ON IMMORTALITY.

A GREAT deal of suffering or of wistful, uneasy longing arises in the human soul, not from a doubt of immortality, but from an uncertainty what the character, the actual features of that immortality, may be. What, we ask, shall be immortal? The ravages in the possessions and comforts of our mortal condition are very plain, much more plain than the precise compensations in the future state by which we may be made whole. To the dweller on this material sphere soon begins the miserable story of a bereaved and disappointed life. We hardly enter upon the riches of our estate, or receive the heritage of our birthright, before, in the flood of time and the robberies of change, we suffer diminution and loss. Those of us over whom have passed many years see vacancy and desolation in the scene of their life all around. A casual glance in our own dwelling or in the house of God misses some familiar presence, whose place a mourner fills.

There is, no doubt, moral instruction intended through the whole extent of this earthly alteration. Wise reflections on our frailty, wholesome regrets for short-coming, and humble prayers for God's mercy, are thus mixed with our habitual feelings and with all the quivering ties of our blood. Worldly strifes look poor and fade away before the composing struggles of death. Throes of sickness and outward dissolution distil a healing balm into the internal wounds of this divided, often jarring world; and we pardon and love one another in the retrospect of all that we have beheld and endured.

But the heart asks for something more than this present moral effect to satisfy its yearnings. It craves to know where and how live those vanished and departed. Often they come back in vision, and make us sigh for some discernment of the manner of their being. We question not their existence or blessedness, but their perceptible character, identity, and form.

Clear and prominent their figures appear to us in the past. Through the perspicuous vistas of experience we see them wasting away under shocks of disease, though with eyes bright from the hidden flame of cheerful trust and undying hope. We hear their expressions of good-will, which, falling from faint lips, sink deeper into the soul than any loud and strong declarations of regard. How to our thought they come back! Patriarchs, with their remembered countenances more admirable than in

any portraits of art, and their voices that sound on the inward ear, making us deaf to all noises of earthly communication ; brethren in years and sympathy, that shared our labors ; sisters, that refined our nature, and made it gentle ; youth of our affections, in whom the worn and aged world became to us young again, and all our hopes of humanity took body and grew afresh ; these shapes crowd upon us. But they come back as they were, not as we can see they are. That is all vague.

Oh, very manifest are the colors and proportions of what is for ever gone ! treasures richer than gold cast away in the wrecks of nature, and delights purer than those of sense withdrawn beneath the curtains of sickness and into the shadows of the grave ; loving parentage, interrupted in its counsels, and ending all its precious cares ; spotless childhood, fading from its promise, moaning on its couch in pain, but not in fear ; for no king of terrors enters its chamber, no phantom of doubt stoops over its cradle, and no angel of judgment beckons it to its doom ; yet the death that releases bears it into the heavens which we cannot fathom, and, while introducing it to unknown exercises and satisfactions, ministers woe to us, the elders that survive. How the various, mingling figures throng into our review, and bring in their train all with which they were once surrounded and accompanied ! cordial salutations by the way-side and at the doors of hospitable mansions, momentary as a passing tone, yet solid

and imperishable to the recollection of the soul; bedsides where we went to give comfort, and received more than we gave; and many a path re-opening only to show where every sublunary expectation terminates.

To our long and steady gaze there unfold once more, scenes of bitter anguish, with woful conversions of healthful, animated frames, that were marvellous instruments of more amazing powers, to senseless clay. There return bands of mourners with streaming tears, making him, whose office was consolation, himself to weep. There beat again hearts that ached in the midst of domestic desolation, and were environed only with memorials of blight, privation, and decay. Restored, too, are all the old associations of the closing days; no gay and festive furniture of lighted rooms and dancing and music and the merry troop, but rather closed windows, darkened chambers, the coffin and the hearse; weeds and badges, with their dark hue, against the ghastly marble of the sepulchre, to whose gloom the architecture of Egypt or Italy is the same; one company after another meeting, one procession after another forming, for the last sad tribute to creatures whose breath is in their nostrils, and, alas! how soon for ever expires!

Now, here is the misery referred to; that not so distinct, oh! far less defined, is their other lot. This is our trial and grief. Amid such vivid remembrances of what in the former days was so dear, with

this sad revival of the exact circumstances under which, in alternate joy or pain, the images of those we once sojourned with have been stamped on our mind, we want, for a sufficing support, something more than a general notion of their survival of the body which they have dropped. We are not content with beholding them in an indefinite superiority, or hunting after them through a blank futurity. We would understand how they are clothed upon in that upper land, and move through that onward course. What once we clung to we would have in restitution, as substantial and characteristic as the reality that was taken away.

Now, my friends, inaccessible as are the details of the spiritual life, the declaration in the text meets this demand and requisition of the heart; for it announces no mere continuance of human life: it does not say only, in large terms, that the vital spark is unquenched; but that "this mortal" — this feeble, withering, vanishing mortal — "must put on immortality." Here is the satisfaction we seek, in the precisely Christian doctrine of immortality, — not an immortality of the human soul alone in its general character, of the soul of the race; not a re-absorption of the spirit of man into its source, but the continued existence in each real feature of the individual being. "This mortal must put on immortality." Our personality is not touched, our identity cannot be destroyed or confused, by death.

"Shall we recognize one another in the future state?" is a question often asked. It is strange that, on this question, Christian believers can either doubt or differ; it being the very peculiarity of our religion that it declares no vague extrication of a common nature from the crumbling tenement, but the transfer of each mind in its particularity, with all the distinguishing marks of its own character upon it; nothing obliterated or lost, but every thing developed into greater clearness and force; so that we shall recognize each other more deeply and strongly than we do here. The veil will be taken off, and the wealth disclosed of affection and devotion, which we in vain essayed to fathom, oft hidden as it was from the nearest friends. We shall not only know each other, but there truly know each other for the first time.

This, again, is the true doctrine and meaning in that special article of the Christian faith, the Resurrection: not that this same flesh, we wear now, shall robe us again, but that the deathless part shall take with it out of the world those actual accustomed traits on which acquaintance may seize; and that no fatal charm of destruction, no strength of transformation, no ruin of dust and ashes, can confound or overlay the habitual lines by which we have been used to discriminate our fellow-creatures, or rob from our sight and possession those chosen and singular points on which our love and reverence have fixed. This is Christian immor-

tality: the soul emerging from damp, dark clods of the valley, to strengthen, heighten, unfold in its stature; yet, in becoming angelic, not part with its own human and cherished qualities, but be better understood and more cordially embraced; for "this mortal must put on immortality."

The tears of your grief shall not bear off on their stream the reality which you have loved and enshrined in your bosom, but only wash the bitterness clean out of your breast, while they purge your eyes to behold the human become angelic, and the earthly heavenly; for the tears, that are pure of selfishness, are aids to the soul's vision, and, falling in love and trust, are answered by God as ascending prayers. The upturning of one sod, altering the whole globe to your look, shall not prove to have been lifted to hide aught that you value; but, in the new view of your mind, to disclose it beyond all material dissolving, worldly change, or temporal accident, a secure and permanent possession.

What the mere senses recognize must indeed for ever sink in the irrecoverable waste of things, stretching from rise to set of day. What disease can wrestle with, and pain disfigure, and decay transmute, and this material dissolving remove, must be for ever given up from our grasp. Therefore, let not our fondness rest on what is purely outward and material. That is the property of death, has his mark on it as spoil for his abode, — a mighty heap of beauty and decoration, of art and allure-

ment, of bodily grace and favor, of gold and silver and precious stones, silken and shining vesture, with every thing of cost and savor, — “meats for the body and the body for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.”

But, exceeding all, and alone in true excellence and glory, rise the things that are indestructible. Believing in general the immortality of man, do we inquire, as well we may, what in man shall be immortal? In the light of this evangelical and rational idea is the answer, — all that is true, genuine, and characteristic, God shall gather out of the broken vessel and fallen shrine of mortality for his worship. The goodness, the moral worth, the spiritual loveliness, which you have revered and been kindled by, shall not perish; but, in its exact shade and original meaning, be preserved, so that you can ascertain it again, as you do one countenance among many, or any peculiar place in the landscape dear to you from your infancy. For it is “the mortal,” — not any dubious, changeable thing, but that you have had communion and fellowship with already, — which shall “put on immortality.” That expression of unutterable love shall not cease and be gone. The mortal aspect that bore it shall fade away; but the spiritual beaming expression, in what shape we know not, shall come back. That smile of melting benignity, which fell and flitted, yet warmed us more than the sun, and made all that had been cold in us to fly and vanish; the lips

on which it rested have long been without sense or motion; but the smile, with its own eternal quality, is and will be ours in heaven; for this "mortal shall put on immortality." Those glances of regard which rested on us, and, though the givers knew it not, so inspired us for every hard duty of patience and self-sacrifice! — I know not by what means or "most miraculous organ" the angels may see, — but the same rays, only hallowed and glowing, shall gleam again to pour happiness and inflame holy desire; for "this mortal shall put on immortality." And oh! those tones, nearest revelations of all that transpires within this tabernacle of clay, though never more they shall be vocal in mortal breath, and never more the tongues they dwelt on move to utterance in this lower atmosphere; yet shall they make the air in that seat of our translation vibrate with celestial music; for "the mortal shall put on immortality." Yes, all that is pure and kind, all that is right and religious, all that is sympathizing and generous, all that has been profoundly interesting and has stirred us, shall be immortal. Death is sent forth the servant of God for the gleaner of this treasure, the transplanter of these flowers, the reaper of this wheat from the tares of sin and vice and folly that are to be burned. But nothing of the riches of his mining, the blossoms of his gathering, the sheaves in his hand, shall be dropped or lost. From the glories and sublimities of martyr-virtue, that have crowned this earth like its mountains, and

flowed through it like its streams, to the sweet modesty and flowering lowliness of life; from toils of faithfulness and agonies to enter the strait gate, down to the ingenuosness of youth and the prattle of a babe's innocence, nothing holy or spotless shall, by the Eye that searches all, be overlooked; for the "mortal shall put on immortality." So, then, not for ourselves only, but for one another, do we, in every true word and act, "lay up treasure in heaven;" and the motive of benevolence, of love to our kindred and philanthropy for our kind, is added to the motives of serving God and saving our own souls, for our fidelity. Shall such motives combine to urge us in vain?

Truly would it gratify the heart's wish thus to leave the announcement in our text, as a doctrine purely of consolation, did not truth require it to be urged as admonition also; implying, as it does, not only that our virtues, but our sins too, shall survive this cradle and tabernacle of the flesh, in which they have been nurtured. These sins are contrary to us, injurious to our nature. In proportion to our allowance of them, they rot or consume that nature, reducing the force and size of our being towards the abyss and dead ruin of the grave. But they themselves live and thrive on our weakening and decline. They cannot, like our clothing to-night when we go to our slumber, be slipped off with the flesh in the darkness of the tomb; for "this mortal," this very creature, as he is, with all

his conscious desires and real purposes, "shall put on immortality." The fancy that we are to be washed clean of all our pollutions, just in crossing the narrow stream of death ; or that every unfit and unhallowed feeling is to be extracted from our enduring part, with the separation of the material husk, leaving us to be born pure, in a sort of second infancy of soul, into the higher sphere, — has no single ground, in reason or scripture, on which to rest. As, what water cannot cleanse, fire must touch ; so, what time cannot overcome, eternity must deal with. It would be doing both violence to God's word, and disrespect to the prophetic conscience, not to own that some sorer discipline must seize, some deeper purification be reserved for, those passing out of this world impenitent and incorrigible transgressors.

The question, then, brethren, is, — What shall we resolve, or consent to make part of us, and so carry with us when we go ? From the solemn oracles we learn that we brought nothing into this world ; and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Nothing of external delight or costliness can we transport with us over the valley which we must cross. But the inward possessions and accumulations of the mind and memory, the propensities we have indulged, the dispositions we have acquired, the plans and designs we have formed and lived by, we shall take along in our journey ; for "this mortal," this very man, this

actual spirit that we are, "must put on immortality." If we have harbored and nursed within us, not good tendencies and aspirations, but evil appetites and passions, then they must be our companions. They must attend us for our punishers, and the avengers of our guilt; nor need there be any others. If we have been thoughtless and unprofitable servants here, so we shall appear there. The moth of our neglect will still eat in our garments; the serpent of envy or hatred bite in our hearts; the demon of avarice possess our soul, though the treasure be wrenched from us as we go; the fire of unholy lust shall burn in our bosom, or the weight of sloth hang on our limbs; every old expression of iniquity be stamped in the shameful lines of our faces, and whatever members and faculties we may have, be the prey of that to which we have yielded them: for "this mortal must put on immortality." What now in us shall be that mortal which shall put on immortality is indeed, of all others, the one interrogation.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

THE CHRISTIAN CONDITION OF SATISFACTION.

**Matt. v. 6. — BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST
AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS; FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED.**

It may seem paradoxical to declare the blessedness of feelings so uncomfortable as hunger and thirst. But the benediction regards the efforts hunger and thirst occasion, and the consequences to which they lead. Hunger and thirst are here only instances of the general analogy between bodily and spiritual wants. As a famished man wants food, as parched lips long for a draught of water, and the food and water are then likely to be found, so the way to be righteous is to want to be righteous.

There is great force in the illustration. Want has been the great educator of the world. The history of man is hardly more than the history of man's wanting something, and then quite surely getting what he wants. For honest, urgent want is very persevering and ingenious. It rarely gives up without attaining what it desires. It has been the encourager of all the labor, and producer of all the wealth, in the world; the provider of comfort,

the prompter to discovery, the originator of arts, universal builder and weaver and projector; in short, the civilizer of the race, — laying the earth under contribution to please the eye and ear, and, from the four quarters of land and sea, raising levies for the least of our senses, the slightest caprices. Such and so mighty is human want.

Oh! now, if we only wanted to be righteous; if the sentiments of the soul could only compete with the nerves of the body; if we could be all as eager for moral excellence as for the perfection of a machine; and as anxious for a remedy of sin, for the cure of our pride and vanity, as of fever and plague; if we had the ambition for character that we have for fortune and a name, or if the idea of the illumination of purity and the warmth of true religion could take hold of curiosity, and stir desire like a new light and heat in our dwellings; what progress would be witnessed in many now laggard on the path of duty!

A savage in the Southern Islands sees a new object, offered by some travelling trader. It may be nothing but a robe or necklace of beads; but it appeals to a want in him. He must, at any price, have what he sees, to adorn his person, and give him splendor and superiority among his tribe. Could a bright display of moral worth but so excite us, till we felt we wanted it, and could not do without it, but must, at any expense of toil and self-denial, transfer to ourselves the beauty of patience, disin-

terestedness, and generosity, then indeed how soon should we have that decoration in Scripture called a finer apparel than "gold or pearls or costly array"!

Here is the explanation of what has so often been made a ground of surprise, why, with such revelations of truth, sublime commands, and shining patterns of goodness, men are no better, but so content in mediocrity or vice. They do not want to be any better. They want property, and they get it. They want better instruments and utensils, and they devise and make them, performing miracles of ingenuity. They want to have their houses furnished; and who so poor as not to have something to gratify the taste, as well as meet all his purposes of convenience, and often of luxury? In every thing else, lean, haggard want works, goes forward, and succeeds, till at length it leaps on a throne in the shape of universal abundance, crowned monarch of the earth, lord of an inexhaustible treasury.

But men do not want to be holy and religious. They do not want to be meek and humble. They do not want to be benevolent and charitable. They would be so, they would possess these noble qualities, if they wanted them, as surely as they contrive the mechanical enginery and tools they require. "Necessity" would no more be "the mother of invention" in material things, than a felt moral necessity would more grandly supply all the

finer traits, better food, and more precious furniture of the soul.

This, too, accounts not only for the small amount, but the low style, in general, of our morality; for the hardness, slowness, and unloveliness of our very virtue. Qualities naturally the sweetest and most generous, beneficence and forbearance, which should "drop as the gentle rain from heaven," seem too often with us but enforced actions, to which our nature yields, as tough wood does to a wedge or a screw, or as the hand opens to an extortioner's tax. Some appear to feel actually wronged by being called to those exercises of religion and charity, which, if they had the hunger and thirst Christ speaks of, they would thankfully lay hold of as their sustenance, and feed on as the bread of life that came down from heaven. He would be thought a strange man, who, after long fasting or a scanty allowance on a voyage, should refuse offered nourishment, and thrust away the cup of refreshment. But how can a spiritual being support nature without righteousness? — how properly exist, without truth and worship, justice and charity, for the necessities of life? Jesus, when he had gone long without the grapes of Judea, or even rubbing the ears of corn in his hands, declared that doing God's will and finishing his work were his meat and drink. Ah! if we knew our wants, the ration of the day for the body would be to us no more needful than the doing of some righteous deeds. We

should at nightfall be empty and pining, if we had not spoken some helpful words. We could not rest in our bed, without having exercised sympathetic dispositions, and rendered to God his due in our prayers. We should not take credit for these things, but thankfully live upon them ; nor could it seem less than absurdity and insanity to want to have any thing in the world, and be careless of our character's thrift and growth.

Do we not touch here the real point of our weakness ? Is there not with us a lack or unconsciousness of this divine hunger and thirst ? Are we not constrained to note a deficiency among us, call it what you will, of moral enthusiasm, of love for goodness, of a passionate longing for virtue, of a kindling zeal for religion ? Therefore is it that we understand no more what Christ meant by eating his flesh and drinking his blood, because we have not the "hunger and thirst for righteousness" on which he pronounced his benediction ; and which would make his life and death our nourishment and stimulus, the vital spirit in us of devotion and self-sacrifice.

The hard, cold, strained, unwilling, outward type of many a nominally Christian man's morality is the saddest and most hopeless symptom of the times, and a severer criticism on the church than any of her enemies bring. While we judge that we have the best understanding of Christianity, and the most perfect form of religion ; — out of the midst even of

old Romish errors and corruptions, stand forth sisters of charity, brethren of mercy, professors of poverty, mendicants, not for themselves but for the gospel, seeming to rise from tropical and arctic graves, dug in the sand or the snow where they fell, overspent with their burning loyalty to their Master; and dreadfully to rebuke that part at least of our easy and prosperous Protestantism, which pretends, and is with all facility admitted, to commune with the Lord, but is in bondage to the world; talks of salvation, but is intent on saving that which perishes; and compasses what progress it makes like one that tugs at the oar of the galley, facing one way and moving another, glad to stop and rest from the slow advance and reluctant task-work; instead of cherishing those good affections, like the breezes before which the boat joyfully speeds to her port.

I am not blind to the real Christianity that exists, but own it and thank God for it. But do we not all ask, "What shall we do with this lifeless, decent appearance of religion, this show of godliness, to which Christ is not 'the living bread;' but, in the prophet's words, a root out of a dry ground, having no form or comeliness or beauty that we should desire him?" Verily we must look for help in such a case up from human power to the chastening providence of God, to make us aware of the wants to which, in our enjoyment and ease, we can be so blind and insensible. That providence is often con-

sidered as but a dark mystery, inscrutable and oppressive. Some minds have even been almost overborne by the spectacles of pain and sorrow, by the thought of how much there is to be suffered in this world. The miseries of life to them rise as a great cloud before the Father's face, and groans of anguish and death almost drown the Father's voice of mercy. How different the aspect of things in the light of religion! Have you never noticed the drying up of springs in the uplands of the pasture send every creature to some deeper well? So, how often has the failure of common worldly sources of comfort driven the soul to the living Fountain, and the wintry waste of an afflicted existence turned it to the heavenly garner!

It may not be improper for me to say this. The minister of religion, if you will allow the professional reference, walks not in sunny places, but continually among shadows, with grief and disease for his companions, dissolving nature ever near him, and hardly, at any time, able to keep his foot clear from the brink of the grave. Not gay and festive places on the line of time make the vista of his recollection; but through sick chambers he treads, through rooms solemn with the hush of sympathy, and reverend as temples to the soul with the consecration of the confined clay; where no tables of abundance are spread, but spiritual wants take their nutriment. With those that bear their own flesh and blood, he stands at the

mouth of the dreamy tomb, and feels the damp from its gloomy space.

Wherefore does not this experience of all that is destructive to mortal strength, and desolating to earthly joy and hope, sink him into a saddened or discouraged man? Because, through the withering of mortal pleasure and expectation, he sees the wakening of the sacred hunger and thirst after righteousness. Through the pining and faded brow and cheek, and the failing of mortal desire, he sees greater beauty of aspiration shine from within than ever hung upon health's freshness and fulness. In faint and dying tones, he hears a more inspiring eloquence of the soul panting for God than from the loudest accents. Holy wants, seeking and finding their blessed gratification, reveal a glory, to which all success of gain and reputation look inferior and poor. The darkest scenes have often the most cheerful irradiation; as the clouds catch, and hold in their fleecy folds, the volatile light that would else escape. As there have been those who groped in graveyards for treasure hidden there, so many have been eternally enriched from the sepulchre. Though it is said the barren sands have commonly been set aside for our burial-ground, richer harvests have been reaped from them, for the food of what is best in our nature, than ever flourished in fertile plain or watered valley. The melting edge of Alpine snows nurtures flowers more delicately beautiful than

grow in a rank soil or cultivated garden. So is it in the fall of human life, where dust goes to dust, and ashes to ashes, from whence we pluck the only amaranthine flower of virtue, to wear for ever. The afflictive Providence of God! and we vindicating it! It vindicates itself in its effects, both to quicken and satisfy the spiritual appetite of man. It makes us break out into the poet's song and prayer,—

“Over our spirits first
Extend thy healing reign;
There raise and quench the sacred thirst
That never pains again.”

I mean not, of course, that trial alone will produce this effect, though *he* must be in a sad condition in whom trial does not produce it. But, however produced, this, above all, we need, — “the hunger and thirst after righteousness;” to feel that we want, as we want nothing else, to be pure, virtuous, and devoted to the divine will; to be moved, as we are moved by nothing else, by the thought and the opportunity of gaining ever-larger degrees of a kind and lowly temper; to strive, as we strive for nothing else, for a just and merciful frame of mind, and to run in the race God in his gospel sets before us, as we do not run for the most brilliant prize in the world.

This one question, and a very plain question to every man, is the most accurate test of our

moral state, and index of our coming destiny; What do we want? It has been a point of well-nigh boundless and interminable controversy, Who will go to heaven? Many are the sectarian titles and qualifications insisted on. But the answer is simply, Every one who wants to go!—all who “hunger and thirst” for the heavenly society, and who would find their congenial element and their perfect delight in its exalted occupations. The peculiarity of your creed will not carry you to heaven. No, nor the mere custom of a form; nor the respectable superficial morality current, accepted in the street or social circle. Do you want to be righteous? Do you want to go to heaven? Do you love and long for holiness and goodness, and for the company of the holy and the good? Does wealth or honor charm and dazzle you less than the heights you aspire to of communion with God? Is power a less thing to you than uprightness? Has the “seen and temporal” laid no spell on you, binding like that of the “unseen and eternal”? Does a religious conscience in you suffer no rivalry from interest, and give no way to excess? Then shall you go to heaven: but no man shall go thither without the want; no man through the bars set up by his own low desire, or over the bounds of a degraded will.

DISCOURSE XXV.

CHRIST'S DOCTRINE OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Matt. xix. 14. — OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

THESE are often-quoted words. I repeat them, because, familiar as they are, it may be questioned if their force is commonly perceived. They are often considered as simply asserting the innocence of little children. That innocence they incontrovertibly imply. But the mere notion of childish innocence satisfies neither the peculiar strength of the phraseology, nor the circumstances in which it was used. This language is also frequently recited as expressing the happiness of departed children in another world, which is undoubtedly a just inference from this declaration of our Saviour, and from every right conception of God. Yet it seems not to be the immediate design of this passage.

To understand its real scope, we must refer to its original connection. The disciples had already understood from their Master, that he was going to set up a kingdom in the world. In this enterprise they had embarked with him, sacrificing other connections and affairs, and staking all on his success.

But they very imperfectly understood the nature of the kingdom he proposed. Although he had endeavored in all his instructions to inform them of his intention, they had not the spiritual capacity, nor, it may be, the willing disposition, to apprehend it. They thought the kingdom was one of outward power, of conquest and triumph over other nations. Rome herself, the all-vanquishing, universally spreading, and invincible, was to bow to Judea. The days of the kings were to be restored with a more royal splendor than ever graced the palmy times of David and Solomon. He that should wield the sceptre would, of course, hold in special favor those by whose help it had been secured. Some of them were even ambitious already of being preferred to the rest, and had disputed about sitting on the right and left hand of the throne. The superhuman power, which Christ so freely displayed, was a pledge of his ability to accomplish his end; while they were growing impatient at its long delay. And now, after another grand exhibition of those omnipotent gifts, fit to usher in the Redeemer's sway, as they are gathered in high debate,—the disciples next him, and the Pharisees around,—a few little children are brought to him, not to be the subjects of his supernatural help, but that he should lay his hands on them and pray. At this request the disciples are instant in their rebuke, and would dismiss them without ceremony, as intruders, with a trivial errand, upon great concerns. But Jesus called

them unto him; the voice that "spake as never man spake" prevailing over the rude rebuff of his ignorant followers. He called them, and said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Here we reach the explanation of my text, — "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." As though he would say to his misconceiving friends, "My kingdom is not one which it requires armed force, banded hosts of men, to establish. Little children are to set it up. If they can be brought to back my efforts, my throne is reared in all the earth. You, with your heart set on aggrandizement, are not fit to help on my kingdom to its seat in the world! No, nor is the race now on the stage qualified largely to promote or fully to receive that kingdom. I look to the next generation for the adherents who shall substantially carry forward the work. Suffer them to come unto me, instil into their minds my doctrines, cultivate in their forming hearts my affections, and they shall maintain my kingdom. They shall bear it on their young shoulders, grasp it with their tender hands, and move it forward with their fresh strength to endless advancement. The present risen generation, prepossessed with sin and prejudice as it is, must pass away, partially influenced, half regenerate. But, as it dies off, the error of its mind and the evil of its heart, too deep ingrained, in too firm a tincture, to be wholly removed and washed out, bring on the new ranks unstained and pure."

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As though Jesus saw how one generation fashions another after its own image, and colors it with its own feeling, he says, "Suffer them to come unto me." Keep your own bad customs and the inveterate iniquity of the world as much as possible out of their way. Stand up on the wretched heap of your own mistakes; station yourself over the melancholy ruins left by your sins; take your post on the decaying embers of your indulged passions, and, from that height and vantage-ground, warn the young and rising generation.

There seems indeed to be meaning and power in the text. It is not the old sinners whose worldly judgments and views can be a sufficiently pure fountain from which to nurse and rear even their own offspring. But bring them to the living water that came down from on high; bring them to the bread of life in the Saviour's teachings, and verily it shall be proved that they are of the kingdom of heaven; and through them that kingdom shall come on earth.

The sense of our text, as thus expounded, brings out an important, practical discrimination touching the twofold way in which our religion works: first, in converting men from sin; and, secondly, in educating children to holiness. Christ had been trying to convert; but, perceiving how hard the task of rooting out the old evil growth, his mind forcibly recurs to the need of planting at first hand the good seed. So he falls upon the sentiment, that little

children are the constituents of his kingdom and the moral hope of the world. There is a sphere for the converting energy of the gospel on those adult in years and astray from God. Conversion is their only hope.

But still, as in the earliest days of our religion, how is Christ's discernment of human nature and foresight of future effects vindicated, as we see the great mass of the grown-up race keeping their old tracks, thronging the familiar passages of bad custom, and dying as they have lived! How rare indeed are conversions after middle life! Thus, like Christ, we turn to little children, as furnishing the chief material for his reign to come.

The reign to come! For the meaning of Christ's words is not yet fully verified. The next generation, which he saw visibly before him represented in those few little children, did not fulfil it. Nor did the next; but each successive one received the truth deeper, and bore it wider. Thus mainly, not alone by bold and revolutionizing energy, but by orderly transmission in ever-widening circles, Christianity gained a permanent footing in the earth,—every new race being but one step, and mankind leaving at every step something of its error and folly and sin behind it. Even when the world seemed to retrograde, in what are called its dark ages, a closer observation shows it was, although slowly or unapparently, still moving on. Through the fidelity of the church, and of every individual

believer, the holy tradition, the apostolic succession, ran.

There is no space now for the application of so fruitful a theme at every point. But allow me to trace it for a moment in connection with some of the grosser transgressions which have weighed down the human soul.

Here is the giant evil of intemperance, so long and widely prevalent that it seems to have mingled alcohol in the very blood of the human family,—to have steeped the human heart and brain in liquid fire. All the moral power of society has been summoned, and put to its highest mettle of courage and vigilance, to battle with and overcome its sway, and bring in the dominion of self-control. What an array of associations, pledges, speeches, essays, votes, wisdom and folly, virtue and sin, has been mustered to the conflict! but with as yet partial success; so that the question is still raised in peril, and sometimes almost in despair,—How shall Christ's kingdom of sobriety come into the human mind? The answer is in our text. Educate your children to sobriety and self-control. Let the rising generation be your temperance society. Reclaim the sot if you can. Clothe him, and bring him to his right mind; as the self-denying votaries of this good cause, in instances not a few, have, to their everlasting honor, done. Still, how the craving desire runs riot in his veins, gnaws uneasily at his vitals, and sinks into the marrow of his

bones, making the presence of his old enemy more dangerous to him than the cannon's mouth! while perhaps there is no safety or peace till that inflamed and corrupted body sinks into the grave, which receives the large proportion of those who have ever been inebriate, with something of their vice inseparably cleaving to them. Strive to convert the drunkard. Let the drunkard himself turn with the fear of God before his eyes. But, still more, educate the young to temperance.

Again, here is this ghastly spectacle of the green and blooming earth torn and gashed with the horrid hoof of war; which, if it be not in itself always and essentially an evil, yet, being made necessary by other evils, is an awful expression of human sin. The sword may sometimes be a holy instrument, sent by Christ,—the sword of the Lord put into a servant Gideon's grasp; but it for ever points to a deep and vast iniquity, which really produces this mournful spectacle of the earth polluted with the red stain of human blood, shed by human hands. As though Death were not devouring and universal enough! As though his step lagged, and needed spurring to a better speed! As though the mortal decree were not the prerogative of the Almighty! And so men and brethren must hurry and push each other into the tomb,—the living body, that has a few uncertain days yet before it, passionately flushed with triumph over the corpse which its blow has made cold and mo-

tionless. O God! how often has this scene been enacted on that footstool of thine, which thou didst fashion for a fraternal home to all thy children!

But this has been the way of the world for how many generations! a state of almost constant war, of which the only consolation is, that war has occasionally maintained the rights of men or purged the passions from which it came, and been the symbol of that force needful to keep in order a sinful world. Even when we were hoping this flame from below was nearly quenched, and were looking with a fearful wonder at the old extinct volcanic craters of human history where it had so tremendously burst forth into the fields of human happiness and hope, again its scorching and withering fury rises under our feet, or broods and lowers like a dreadful storm round the whole horizon of the world, and portends a new, unbounded conflict between Despotism and Freedom; while muttering thunders here and there, or successive outbreaks and discharges, marshal on the strife; or the figure of some fiery-tongued refugee from oppression walks up and down, with his fingers on his hilt, between the opposite lines as they are drawn out in huge array.

The Christian believer, not in anger but deep sorrow, cries out, "How long, O Lord! how long shall the dreadful delusion, the impious crime, and the warring lusts from which they spring, abide? When shall the peace, announced by angels, be

fulfilled; and the Prince of peace, who walked in human form so many ages ago, spiritually come?" How shall we hasten his coming? Oh that we could convert the world to his temper and doctrine of love! But we cannot wholly convert the world that is. It is impossible but that offences come. Wrath, injustice, ambition, avarice, have still fearfully extensive rule; and these are the bitter seeds of war. We cannot convert at once the world. But can we not educate our children into a holy hatred of the spirit and deeds of war, and thus turn the scale for the coming time? thus, prospectively at least, dethrone Moloch from the usurped human heart? Yes: let this too be our peace-society, formed from the hearts of the young, gathering its ranks throughout Christendom, to march at length, with no carnal weapons, but with mighty and irresistible onset, to rescue mankind from their own evil passions, and untwine the clutch of mortal enmity in which they writhe.

Once more: man, "created to be free," is, far and wide, crushed beneath the tyrannous hand of his stronger fellow-man. His neck, made to bow only in sign of obedience to God, is bent down under the despotic or enslaving yoke. Call it in any case inevitable, the result of circumstances; always it is proof of sin. All that is holy in conscience, all that is good and loving in the heart, all that is sacred in piety, all that is foreboding in the fear of God, yea, all that is prudent and prophetic in the worldly

wisdom of man, rises up in unison against the monstrous oppression. But still it goes on; and multiplying millions groan in bondage here in the land of freedom, and there in the other hemisphere.

What shall we do? Oh! convert men by all means from the terrible wrong! Secure the "deliverance to the captives" which Christ preached. "Set at liberty them that are bruised." Good gospel-words they are. But if oppression, grown hoary in her ancient and prescriptive sway, will not heed or hear, but mocks our efforts, laughs to scorn alike our entreaty and reproach, and succeeds in keeping us year after year at bay with one hand, while she rivets the fetter or waves the scourge with the other; then, not remitting other just exertions, and in any wise not attempting to cast out Satan by Satan, we must turn for help to our children; we must gain over the rising generation of Christendom to our aid. We must educate the young everywhere to the love of liberty, not for themselves, for their own dear sake and their kindred's sake, alone, but for all men. Yea, as the old Carthaginian captain swore his son at the altar to eternal hatred against Rome, we must administer to our children the higher vows of a fidelity to their Saviour, in the passing generation too rare; and of an everlasting opposition to every thing that resists his benignant rule. This shall be our anti-slavery society too, better and stronger than all others, rising up through the length and breadth of the church,

not with violent speech and passionate act, but with the slow-moving yet ever-onward phalanx of its power sweeping all injustice and tyranny from the face of the earth. For what arbitrary and cruel despotism, great or small, shall have strength or bravery to stand before it, as it comes on, resistless as the revolution of the globe?

Of such as little children is the kingdom of heaven. Little children brought to Christ, educated in his truth, made to imbibe his spirit, and coming forward with their innumerable ranks, from every land and clime, with slow procedure which nothing can put back,—they alone shall have power finally and fully to bring in the authority and establish the reign which Jesus Christ came from God in heaven to set up on earth among men.

With solemn joy I hark to the marching of this great troop, mightier than all the noisy hosts of the camp and the bloody plain. Their tread, far off and near by, grows year by year wider and more audible. Their van is in the midst of us. Parents and teachers are divinely appointed to the lead of the vast company. Tyrants and oppressors, all sinners and corrupters of human virtue, tremble at their coming. At the trumpet blown by their youthful voices, the walls of every evil institution shall fall down. Quiet, and without violence, as the light of the morning, is their advance; but powerful, all-pervading, and creative, as the sun in heaven, their influence. I see them banding, I hear

them approaching, as the very kingdom of heaven. Those old words of our text ring out more arousing than any clarion upon my ear. From the little audience gathered on that further side of Jordan, they come as melody softly loud to the great Captain's host, but, like the music in a march of attack, dreadful to his foes. The gentle voice of him who first uttered them, mustering those that fight with no carnal weapons, waxes into a call with which the martial instruments of all nations cannot vie. The Commander's speech passes down to every one in the conduct under him, till it reaches the youngest follower in all his ranks. At the pervading sound a decisive movement runs through the whole array advancing together. No reeling step is seen, no clanking chain or scourging whip is heard. Only forward to the victories of peace and love, the children of a new-born race, a noble army, go. God speed them ! and God help us to speed them on their way !

DISCOURSE XXVI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HEAVENLY VISION.

Acts xxvi. 19. — WHEREUPON, O KING AGRIPPA, I WAS NOT DIS-
OBEDIENT UNTO THE HEAVENLY VISION.

You are familiar with the circumstances of Paul's vision, — a vision not of the night, when ill-defined objects take the shape of phantoms, and strange figures, to men's heated imaginations, have issued from graves and wandered through churchyards; but a vision at mid-day, — a vision of Christ, outshining, as such a vision well might, the brightness of the sun, and turning the noon into a shadow. These circumstances of the apostle's miraculous conversion are so startling, they form a picture so vivid, that they may divert attention from the main point and application of the story, in that obedience to the vision, on which, by Paul himself, the chief and final emphasis is laid; and which makes the whole account, though miraculous, available for our instruction. For we, too, it cannot be doubted, however earthly objects may absorb us, have occasional visions of heavenly things. They are let

down upon us in this dim spot which we call earth, from that upper world alone of glorious reality, which is their source ; and, when they appear, it is always with a lustre that "never was on sea or land," but transcends the beams of the morning, and sometime lightens every man that cometh into the world. In the pauses of our labor, or mid the tasks of diligence, as the day waxes, or still more as it wanes to twilight again, they come to us with invitation or rebuke. In our youth they are sent to every one of us ; and, if we remain at all ingenuous and aspiring, they continue into age. We have all had the visions ; but do we add to the visions the conscientious logic of Paul, being not disobedient to them ? No question touches so near to the heart of character. In the frequent contrast of the vision with the rare and poor obedience, we find the full description of all human depravity. This failure to perform the nobleness which we perceive, corrupts the mind by breaking the natural bond between thought and action ; for it is a true proverb that good thoughts are no better than good dreams, unless they be executed. Mere visions are nowhere of any worth. What would have mattered an earthly vision, so clear and transporting, of the roundness of the globe, and of seas and lands rising and bending afar in speculative sight, unless he to whom the vision came had strained every nerve, and moved kings and queens, to realize his vision ?

But, beyond this generality of remark, there is a large class of persons of whom this unfaithfulness to the heavenly vision is characteristic. We do not find any fault with their discernment of the truth. They are keen and quick to apprehend a proposition, and skilled to distinguish its correctness or falsity. The whole sphere of spiritual realities is commonplace to them, — a field all travelled over; and every new presentation of it, an old story. But, though they assent to Christian doctrines and commands, and rejoice in your finest visions, which they will tell you they have had themselves, yet they do not any of these things. Like the Pharisees sitting in Moses' seat, they say, and do not. Like the second son in the parable, they have often declared they would go, when they went not. There is an ignominious disproportion between their vast religious knowledge and their slender moral action, like that — if the connection of such superfine principles with such vulgar aims may excuse the allusion — once satirized between the abundant wine drunk, and the little bread eaten, by the sot.

I believe there is no moral evil, of which we so need to be purged, as this inequality or contradiction between our principles and our deeds; or rather this is the very root and essence of all sin. Unless asleep under the blaze of Christian light, we have visions enough. What exclamation so common in every mouth as this: "It is beautiful!" — that

expression or image of excellence and benignity in nature, art, landscape, painting, song, book, speech, "Oh, it is beautiful!" Yes, but do you obey its beauty, or allow it to be beauty all outside of you, a mere vision and meteor of the air? What is the abstraction of beauty or excellence worth, if it is not incorporated into your soul, incarnated in your life? It is worth as much as the gold of California was when hid deep in the mine, with the rock binding it, and the river flowing over it, and the forest towering above it, — generation after generation passing by it, all unsuspected and vain. But let the abstract idea be worked out and extended from its lurking-place through your conduct, and it will be like the ore and sand changed into the currency of the nation, bearing enormous business, and inestimable wealth, and endless comfort, on the bosom of its boundless stream.

There is great, and, more specially it must be said, very wilful guilt in having the vision, and not fulfilling it. For this vision never stands as a mere picture in the imagination, as if God were pleasing us with a dumb show from heaven; but, as in Paul's case, is always accompanied with a command. It has a lifted finger in it, a voice to beckon or urge, "Do this!" or "Forbear that!" It is not many different visions that we have of spiritual things, chaotically changing like the sparklings in a kaleidoscope, but a few high and glorious visions often renewed; as though, by their endless repeti-

tion, God said they ought to occupy our efforts all our days. While we sing to God our hymn, —

“I’ve seen thy glory and thy power
Through all thy temple shine:
My God ! repeat that heavenly hour,
That vision so divine ! ” —

after concluding our song, we are not to sit down content with the luxury of the vision ; to think we are to do nothing but eat this fairy food of fancy, and take our tears for our title to heaven, so sweet and delicious sometimes is our weeping ; but to rise and go forth to accomplish what we see and admire.

So did the author of our text. Paul’s vision cost him something. He had more to do than paint it, brilliant as a work of Raphael or Michael Angelo, in that famous oration of his to Agrippa. He had to walk, in obedience to it, like a servant after his master, through Judea, and to go into Arabia, and sail over the Mediterranean Sea, and traverse barbarous lands, and be in perils of robbers, and fight with wild beasts at Ephesus, not safe among his own countrymen, in chains at Rome, all from that vision ! as he courageously preached, and grandly exemplified his preaching ; never refusing for himself more than all the labor and suffering which he enjoined upon others. He had visions indeed ! Sometimes he knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body ; he was caught up to the

third heaven, heard unspeakable words; was in a trance in the temple; but his visions were no dim, unsubstantial, transitory spectres of midnight ghastliness. He drew them down from the heavens to the earth, as the old sage did philosophy. He made them, like living, noble-spirited creatures, work in the toil of life for the glory of God and the salvation of men. He never was a dreamer, without being a doer of his dreams. He counted it foolish even to narrate or enumerate his visions in words, instead of putting them into deeds. What he saw, on the road to Damascus, of the great Lord and Master, we read, made him blind to surrounding things in the world; and if, without the supernatural wonder, we have the same vision of all that is holy and divine in Jesus, we shall be voluntarily a little blind to what is commonly brightest and most dazzling in the eyes of men on earth.

In urging the obedience, let me not undervalue the vision. We must first have the heavenly vision to obey. It will not answer just to be busy with industry, however constant, if aimless or having only a vulgar design. The great vision of truth and duty must arise and be gazed at, to guide us. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." The worker, teacher, scholar, trader, parent, child, must have a vision of the good that is to be sought and done, each in his own task or vocation. But, then, they who are to be honored are not the visionaries,

who theorize about justice and good, and set their minds simply to catch splendid conceptions, like a line for fish in the stream, throwing away in subtle musings the while what they catch; but the actors who embody their best conceptions in solid deeds. Unfulfilled visions! they are but a motto belied, a seal falsified, a coat-of-arms disgraced by the degenerate wearer. Imaginative thinkers and base actors, transcendent in selfishness as in thought, voluble and talking well but failing in the result, deserve not the respect belonging to those less loquacious of, but more obedient to, the heavenly vision which is not in their head only, but in their heart and in their hand. Oh! it is easy to have a vision of a plan for the poor, the sick, the sorrowful; the advice, supply, help, or warning to those ignorant, wayward spirits or desolate hearths. But who, with deeds of succor, and words of encouragement and cheer that are sometimes deeds when they come from a doer's mouth, will bring the vision to pass? If every strong man would help some weak one, it would be done; the social problem, which, from England to America, so troubles us, solved; and all the talk about poverty and destitution cease. It is all a question of obedience to the vision.

The Lord said to his servant of old, "Come up to me into the mount;" where was the sight of his glory like devouring fire. And into the mountain of the Lord, we have all some time gone up. Ex-

perience of the vanity of this world has sometimes carried us up to a larger view of life. Meditation and prayer have on their pinions lifted us. Grief, the dark angel, a household companion, covering our customary haunts with gloom, has yet atoned for this, by taking us under its wings, and bearing us to the contemplation of eternal life and blessedness. Disappointment, the flight of riches, the ruin of prosperity, driving us from lower pursuits, have roughly raised us aloft, and revealed grand realities and enduring satisfactions. In these ampler prospects, from this loftier station, during "these high hours of visitation from the living God," how the ordinary interests which absorb and impassion us sink far away! How low and how mean, from the height we stand on, like fields and streams diminished in the distance, they look! — earthly goods, honor, pleasure, and power, turning to dross, trodden under foot as refuse, and blown away like chaff!

But we cannot be in this state of vision all the time, ever above the world. We must go down into the world. But to what purpose do we go down, without the vision to rule and direct? Oh that we could go down, not disobedient to the heavenly vision! — like God's servant, when he fashioned the ark in all things like the pattern shown him in the mount; so ordering our behavior according to all that God has shown to the eye of our mind; squaring our dealings to that

celestial equity, shaping our utterance to that immortal truth, and making our mercy flow in the circle of that eternal love.

But there is the difficulty. This is no delightful pastime, no holiday sport, easy as breathing. This is the working part. This requires all patience, toil, and perseverance. The first is but sight and calculation, like mathematical estimates upon paper; the last, the construction of the building, with posts and beams of timber. The first is like the artist's idea, as it visits him, glad and inspiring; the last, the canvas full of forms, and the block become a statue, which he stooped and wore his frame to draw and mould.

Be careful indeed to behold first the vision of divine righteousness, like David, who, as we read, was envious at the flourishing of the wicked, till he went into the sanctuary, saw the vision of God's justice, and understood their end. In the sanctuary behold it: then go forth from the sanctuary to make the world a temple, by your observance of the righteousness you have beheld. Let strong endeavors, displays of magnanimity, institutions to educate, relieve, and save, express your visions; else they fade without use, as seed in the catacombs not sprouting for thousands of years. Before a vision of liberty for mankind, the thrones of all Europe sometimes seem to rock. Shall the greater vision of the moral redemption of mankind pass before us in vain, unapplied to our own souls,

fruitless to those around us within our reach? So thought not the apostle Paul.

At every step this law meets us, and searches close into our hearts and homes. Visions of duty, of what is right, generous, magnanimous in our own household, appear; and we think, "Oh, how fair and gracious and generous we will be!" They do appear. We kindle at them. For the moment, we think we are as good as the visions themselves. Do we obey them? Do those moments of belief and resolution become years of faithfulness? The kindness, humility, fidelity, self-sacrifice, and self-renunciation that delight us in vision, as we meditate and pray in our closet or by our fireside, are they ours in fact; or are they as something that we think we hold in our hand, but, opening our hand, find we have it not? Are they only a print and inscription in the "volume of the brain," as sometimes in the modern Syrian Church, on each morsel of the bread of communion, for every single partaker, is stamped a little image of the cross? But only they are faithful who have that cross transferred to be engraven in their heart and life. In the church-calendar, there is a feast of the Epiphany, or celebration of the star in the wise men's vision. But, though kings still repeat the magi's gifts, what does it signify, save to those who obey the vision heralded for all time?

Must we not lowly kneel before God, and confess, — "Lo! we have had many visions of hea-

venly truth and goodness ; and to but few have we been 'not disobedient.' Lo! the forerunners of divine beauty and sanctity have been seen by us, and often not followed. Ideas of disinterestedness and perfect love have gleamed upon us, which we have not put into action. Obligations of self-control, stronger than the bands that bind nature together, have been witnessed in us, which we have not, in every restrained appetite and tempered inclination, kept." Let mercy not quench the light by which we have so failed to be guided ; but, from the Holy Spirit, may it still shine, till it become the illustration of our course, as it is the only brightness and dignity of our nature. A pillar of fire in our darkness, and of cloud only upon the gaudy pomp and miserable vanity that would mislead, let it still win us from all our wanderings, steadily on to whence it came in the better land !

CONCLUSION.

THE preceding discourses, having each one its own theme, may, I trust, be read separately with no lack of unity and completeness. My method of arrangement, however, makes them but the sequel of another series, and forms them into one progressive work. Persuaded that Christianity, though a spiritual, is not an indefinite religion ; convinced of the importance of accepting it in its clearness as well as its comprehensiveness ; and seeing the loss and mischief involved in overlooking its peculiarities, in confounding it with any other thing, or with all things universally, generalizing it away into an indeterminate, unappreciable quality of vague laudation and barren result,—I have essayed to present, however faintly, its lineaments. This singleness of aim may excuse a few words more in the same intention of binding together the disjointed and scattered members of a religion, which may, in so many ways, be mutilated or missed. Feeling how imperfectly I have represented the Christian Body and Form, scarcely winning more than the shadow thereof to fall on my leaves ; and that, as

with the old warrior's stature, which the poet measures as identified with his absent troop, —

“ Were the whole frame here,
It is of such a spacious, lofty pitch,
Your roof were not sufficient to contain it ; ” —

I would make one more closing attempt to touch, if not embrace, the substance. I know not how better to finish my design of indicating the entire shape of the gospel, than, under the figure already suggested, of traits or features. According to the Scripture itself, the revelation made to us is of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which beholding as in a glass, we are transformed into the same image. Let us ask, What is this countenance, presented in our faith, which, as at a glance, we can catch and hold ever before us, to enlighten and to guide ?

It resembles with a difference, or presents at once more and less than we find in, the countenance of nature, the wide face of the world. It has indeed the same strength, intelligence, and benignity ; but to the sincere observer it has no abysses of horrible doubt, no shifting mists of blind uncertainty, no measureless depths of appalling gloom, corresponding to the blank terror and baffling darkness of the creation. It does not, by a merely interrogatory or an indecisive aspect, balk the mind, put it on a weary quest to work out a reply to its own inquiries, vexing it to settle for itself whether there be

many gods or one Maker ; or to handle, in eternal fear, the problem whether the Power above it be purely good, or moved with malignity,—but at once solves these questions in the luminous shining through it of the only Disposer and the perfect Father. In this face of Christianity, there is no empty void, no hopeless confusion, uneasy hesitation, or vast obscure misgiving, as in the stony look of an Egyptian sphinx. There is on it no mocking mask, suggesting an eyeless and heartless waste beneath, as in the huge lines of the hard and hollow shell of Pantheism. But there is a plain, everlasting glory of truth, justice, and love, to satisfy the longing soul. It has living features, that grew from the likeness of an innocent child into divine knowledge and power ; and, through the first unperceiving ignorance of the world, up to the chief recognition of the human mind, taking centuries for their development, and, that they may stand in mature dignity before all nations, requiring centuries more to give them room.

In this figure of Christianity the visible aspect is shown through all its express ordinances and institutions, the meaning and importance of which I have striven to unfold. Thus the truth of the Scripture-illustration is plainly evinced ; for, as we must look into the face of a relative or friend to ascertain his purpose and spirit, so we must attend to the rites of Christianity to receive its instruction. With any mortal countenance it is in no definable

complexion or fixed proportion alone, but rather in the fine and grand expression, that the interest or beauty consists; so is it in the shape of our religion. It is the love that warms its service, the holiness that flows through its signs, the mercy and forgiveness established in its monuments, that make all these outward characteristics dear. As the electric wire is valuable for the earthly communications which it brings, which no other channel could seasonably to the pressing need convey; so the historic and actual matter of Christianity is unspeakably precious for the messages from heaven which it carries to the relief and assurance of the human heart, and which, in the breaking of its line, would be interrupted, and might never come to yield their glad tidings. Yet to stop with the ritual, and to worship the ordinances, is like amusing one's self with the play of the magnets yonder, instead of heeding their commands; or like idolizing the face of a friend, without ever entering into his soul. It is a singular fact that our memory holds in a less distinct material measure the countenance of those dearest to us than it does that of comparative strangers, because, I suppose, the mind comes at length to penetrate to and rest on the idea and sentiment beneath. So, in proportion as we reach to the significance of the ritual, though only prizing it all the more for what it conducts, we shall stand less by any rigid mode of its construction.

Presenting Christianity under this idea of its

countenance or features also explains much of what has been thought its varying character, and of the diverse views taken of it. A living countenance, though it be of the best, wisest, and most consistent being, is not the same to all observers or to any one observer in all moods. Nay, moral consistency requires his different regard for different objects. Upon one action or quality of a faithful soul he will gaze with approval and pleasure; and his face, as you notice it, shall be nothing but benignity and smiles. For another opposite action and quality, on the same principle, he can show only dislike; as God himself beholds the good with complacency, but cannot look upon sin without abhorrence:—

*“Now thou array’st thine awful face
In angry frowns without a smile.”*

So is it with the countenance of Christianity. There is in it no external dead immobility, but the nicest shades and gradations of favor or disesteem. It appears as though alive to discern and judge. It fronts the wilful and persisting transgressor with holy indignation, and in its eye a consuming fire. Its very love takes the form of wrath for the wicked. It gathers blackness to the hypocrite and the profligate, yet is full of sweet records and promises to the obedient. It holds forth no average doom of general denunciation to all offenders, but discriminates the varieties of guilt and adjusts its menace to each degree; burning almost with literal flame

against gross uncleanness and the double-dyed fraud, that cannot appreciate the fine of a noble penalty or feel the torment of remorse; and waiting all the while with generous reproach and high-minded shame on the conviction of the sensitive and awakened spirit: as the parental office of earthly punishment, that must for one child be done with a rod, is effectually discharged for another with a glance. This is the marvel and glory of our religion coming forth through the gospel features. It draws its lines delicately as its vision falls light and tender on the short-comings of which we repent and the errors we forsake; but with the flash of terrific lightning it trenches into and scars our obstinate iniquity. According as we yield or resist, it stoops fierce as the eagle, or broods gentle as the dove. It "looks" upon Peter, and sends Judas "to his own place." It is a blending of love and purity, in which "both strive and both prevail." With one hand it pours out the cleansing stream, and with the other beckons to the happy feast; but, as the disciples of ancient religions washed before eating, so must we first purify ourselves at its font for the best enjoyment of its board.

For human virtue and fidelity, too, the countenance of Christianity has a scale of expression, broad and minute, corresponding to the elevation of what it would reward. To those who serve God from inferior motives, and attend more to the recompense than to the intrinsic gladness of their devotion, it

makes the New Jerusalem glimmer with foundations and gates of gold and pearl and precious stones, and opens a sight of harps and crowns and palms. But, to the refined and exalted soul, that asks no payment but the privilege of devotion, it turns all these things into shadowy emblems, as its face shines with the rapture of the worship, and beams with the gratitude of the song. For ever its flexible features are the sign of its inflexible mind of truth and justice and love to the sons of men.

One class of believers, possessed with the terrors of the violated law, smitten from above with the injured majesty of divine holiness, and wrought upon from below by a terrible fascination from "that old serpent called the Devil," seeking whom he may devour in their transgression, — add a cast of exaggerated gloom to the features of our religion; and, giving an exclusive sense and excessive emphasis to its traits of threatening, carry the awe of celestial equity into a dire cruelty of eternal infliction and boundless torture, which, imposed or prescribed, would be the disgrace of the worst tyranny in the world. An antagonist class of believers, of more joyous and sanguine temper, so abide by their confidence in the divine goodness to every creature; so forget the possible severity and length of discipline, that may, by aggravation of human sin, be made necessary to the ends of that very goodness; and so overlook the sad and dreadful instrumentalities of Providence ploughing

through the world, and sinking deep its furrows of pain at our very side,—as to tone down the solemn aspect of Christianity into a likeness of cheap enjoyment; to delineate a portrait in which its native dignity seems giving way to superficial levity; and, in the very act of removing from their similitude of the Faith the deep and lasting marks of controversy with God, take away also from the real worth and honor of the human soul, either in its own esteem or the respect of its Author. For, in our contention which we wage with the Most High, and in the point which he raises with us because of our offences, our nature is more ennobled, and will finally be more blessed, than by any easy and good-humored smoothing-over of the difficulty, or slight healing of our wound. That is not the office of the good physician, which Christ is, and which God is. In these allusions, however, I intend not to designate particular denominations as they are known and arranged under any old titles; for the ancient bands are so broken, and, as sometimes has happened with soldiers in actual battle, different companies, in their plans and measures of opinion, are so inextricably mixed and confused together, that the uniform cannot be distinguished,—and the ancient nomenclatures have lost much of their value. I mean only those, more or fewer, who answer to my description. Any near approach to a creed either of laxity or rigor can appear but as a vagary, completely off the

ground of Scripture-truth. Instead of altering or contracting the well-proportioned view of the gospel by our own extreme or narrow mood, it is better to remark in it, according to the New Testament account, "the goodness and severity of God."

The features of our religion look beyond the present moment. Certainly the countenance of Christianity is confined to no immediate and ephemeral significance, like a thoughtless, merry face at a festival or in the street; but, like an angel's face in the divine art of the old painters' canvas, it reflects the light of other worlds, and is full to overflowing of future reference. A coming day, a final reckoning, shines clearly through. There is in it no sharp-sighted selfishness, no shrewd and knowing calculation of profit and loss in these lower affairs of ours, but a sublime inspection of the grand issues of weal and woe, according to the right or wrong of human character. We may choose for a time not to meet this survey of our deeds and dispositions in their consequences. Not daring to think that we can outface Christianity; prudently fearing that, catching our eye, it may disturb our countenance, we may prefer, with cool aversion, to turn away from its sight. But we cannot for ever escape, or put it away. Fixed in eternal truth, it will at length pierce our insensibility, scare our indifference, and force our fugitive souls to forsake all their doublings, to confront and abide

its search. The institutions set up, the affections cultivated, the explanation of evil offered, the object of life to be pursued through death, the works done, doctrines delivered, and terms of judgment proposed, under its light, are all in relation with the ages beyond this little stream of existence; and lose no less the amplitude of the intention than the scope of their influence, when restricted from a limitless reach of being.

There is indeed a strange, almost paradoxical, power and beauty for both worlds in this countenance of our religion. Fastened full upon all the business of earth, without a visionary tinge, it is yet charged with supernatural enthusiasm. It glows with unbounded ecstasy, and smites with unweighed warning. It unrolls an "eternal blazon" of rapture or despair, according to the reader of its page. It is a miraculous scroll, like that which the prophet saw flying through mid-heaven; only it is written within and without in tokens of grace, mercy, and forgiveness, as well as mourning, lamentation, and woe. It contemplates this temporal state as crowded with great deeds and momentous consequences; and, meanwhile, mirrors that everlasting lot before which the world shrinks to a cipher, and passes like a dream. It is perfectly practical and infinitely ideal; yet in one character does not contradict, but only completes, the other.

What look shall we, in our turn, give back to

this large-featured respect of our religion? Certainly it should be a look of reverence and gratitude from pupils who would learn, and children who would obey. As with the face of a parent or ruler, our own regard greatly determines the regard which we shall receive. An eye of defiance can create in wisdom and goodness themselves only an offended and avenging air, which, to our trust and submission, will become "sweet as summer." Even the solid features of the world change with the mind of the observer; and those finer traits of truth, which the free Spirit of God instantly moulds, are infallibly adapted to the moral condition and wants of his offspring. Ah! the inconsistency sometimes imputed to the Bible is rather in ourselves. If it be, as the skeptic says, a harp that plays many different tunes, it is because there is many an ear of various chord to listen to its sound; because one bold and rushing temper needs its alarming note, and another bruised spirit requires a gentler melody; because a crash of ominous discord is the very and only thing to arrest the steps of the ungodly, and, to the penitent, a different sweeping of the same strings,

"In strains as soft as angels use,
Should whisper peace."

If we have come into harmony and atonement with God, the very thunders that burst terrifying over our impious head shall pass into solemn music, and

melt into the innocuous blaze that darts up brilliance above the horizon without a bolt or a roar.

Let us render to the religion, that accosts us so justly and kindly, the confiding and deferential entertainment which it deserves. Let us meet the benevolent guest, that visits us, with an equal and corresponding good-will. Let it lead us even as the Lord would his servant, "I will guide thee with mine eye." The good son asks only his father's look, or changing countenance, to move and wind him better than bit and bridle can the horse, or helm the ship. So he that studies and knows Christianity shall trace in her complexion an index to all duty, a guard against temptation, and deliverance from every doubt. He shall find in her a friend that will never desert him, but, in time of want, be always at hand. She shall mark out his course through this wilderness, and recover him from his wandering. She shall surely counsel him in every perplexity; she shall sympathize with him in his sorrow; she shall sit beside him in his sickness; and bend over his dying bed, pity fleeing before triumph in her face, as, with jubilant singing, she opens the prospect of more abundant and unceasing life. *She* shall do it, did I say? Shall I not rather, without a figure, say that Christ himself, her author and finisher, shall do all this? Yea, it is his face that we shall see in his religion. Through him we shall be satisfied when we awake in the likeness of God, and in the light of his reconciling

countenance. When he shall put and hush us to sleep in the evening of our days, in that night of death which approaches, may he so too awake us!

Like a surveyor whose only way to get the measure of some huge natural object is by going to its different sides and taking many points of observation, so I have tried to reach the shape of this vast and real thing which we call Christianity. The true aim in any such attempt is, if possible, so to present revealed truth that it shall avoid injuring the proper freedom of thought, and yet possess determinate attributes, clothing without cramping the mind. In the name of liberty to bring forward on the wings of ignorant or purely individual inspiration gospels continually new, with transcendent caprice to set aside all that is solid in Christian history and experimental in its action on the human soul, for the substitution of some ever-shifting notion of forward fancy, is as foolish and unprofitable in religion as would be a similar course in philosophy, of presuming to instruct in a branch of wisdom with no knowledge how its disciples have ever reasoned. Christianity is a Spirit and Life; Christianity is a Body and Form. In feeling along the joints and tracing the vital cords of this great system, which so defies logical analysis, and when dissected is dead, wheresoever I have deviated, and whatever I may have left unascertained, I trust at least not to have forgotten that my business has

been intuition of existing traits, not the vain pretence, by private creation, of an imaginary likeness. The last link attained in our religion is that between vision and obedience: this is the sensorium of its substance and soul. In vision the gospel comes to us in its extreme refinement; in obedience it is most manifest and concrete. Its two opposite and extreme terms are thus, as the ether condensed into atmosphere, brought together. To bring them practically together with clear success and entire accomplishment is to be the perfect Christian. Should my poor discoursing assist any to a result so admirable and everlasting in its promise of good, I shall thank God for effecting a design which he has allowed me to entertain.

But, even with some failure, it should not be counted ill to undertake a delineation of Christianity in strokes at once firm and flowing; to seek the solid breadth of ideas, without the rigidity of dogmas; and to present the church, not according to an unyielding pattern, like an iron frame and steel points to get the fac-simile of a human face, but in the free posture and expressive feeling of a portraiture made by the pencil, instead of the cold and dull daguerreotype. Perhaps no controversy of the day has raged with so great and prolonged acrimony as that upon the precise model of ecclesiastical service. The assumption of any exact observance as authoritatively existing in Christianity, and capable of being certainly settled in the uniform

practice of Christians, is one of falsehood and philosophical impossibility; and the protracting of such dispute about externals is like that problem on the infinite divisibility of matter, which is alike undemonstrable and endless. While the main features of evangelical worship are fixed, the visible procedure of the worshippers, like the stature of a human being, changes and grows, takes on new beauty and power, according to the unfoldings of Christian knowledge and excellence; and ever, like the child through whom it was to be developed, increases in favor with God and man.

But this vital magnifying and alteration of the incarnate truth gives no license to those novel instructors, who, not recognizing human history, nor holding themselves amenable to rational law, have, like the crude converts Paul rebuked, after the idiosyncrasy of unripe conceit, every one a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation; who would make a religion for the human race in a day; who would substitute unstable counsel and hasty inspiration for the doctrine which has been food and breath of life to the children of men for ages; and who, blown about by every wind of doctrine, would have others lean on the lightness of a feather as on the columns of rock, which "from their firm base" can never fly. We attend not to the man who would waste our time in inconsistent discourse from impotent notions and reasonings of beauty, but to the artist who shows us

images of heroes and martyrs and saints. So it is not a religious speculation that deserves our regard, but those real traits manifesting eternity and heaven as by a divine art, which grandly uses all time, life, and the world, for its clay. May the guardian angel, our good genius, owned by heathen and Jewish wisdom, assigned by Christ to every soul, the messenger of God's Spirit suited to every one, which can do more in a moment than we wilfully in years, attend on all our efforts by this model, for our own improvement, one another's welfare, and the saving of mankind!

THE END.

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